

EVALUATING THE BENEFITS OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the benefits of co-curricular activities for students enrolled in this module during semesters two and three at public institutions in Malaysia through community service programs. The advantages of extracurricular activities for students' knowledge, attitudes, academic performance, and skills in community service programs are the main emphasis of this study. 154 surveys were completed by students enrolled in a two-semester community service program. The four benefits of extracurricular activities are measured in this study using four sections with corresponding questions. The results of this study demonstrate the beneficial effects that student participation in community service projects has a positive and useful benefit towards student academic performance, enhancing student skills, improving student attitude, and improving student knowledge.

Keywords: Co-curricular, Community service, Student academic, Student attitude, Student knowledge, Student skills

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Participating in co-curricular activities provides students in university with a multitude of advantages that go beyond the conventional academic curriculum. These activities provide university students the chance to cultivate crucial life skills, augment their personal development, and expand their entire educational encounter. This study also uncovers the rationale behind students' participation in co-curricular activities. There are several reasons for being involved in co-curricular activities such as status and recognition, the development of abilities and skills, pleasure and enjoyment, improvement in academic performance, and the development of a leadership style.

Engaging in co-curricular activities has consistently been associated with the cultivation of soft skills in students. Moreover, they have a pivotal function in cultivating leadership, teamwork, communication, and critical thinking abilities (Shaharuddin, 2021). Extra-curricular activities in Vietnamese universities have been recognised as a crucial approach to cultivate

general abilities in students. The efficiency of these activities is influenced by various aspects, including university leadership, student engagement, and external support (Nghia, 2017).

Co-curricular subjects are specifically designed to enhance academic learning by fostering students' abilities, talents, and personal qualities outside of the traditional classroom setting. These courses encompass a broad spectrum of domains, such as athletics, clubs, and organizations, performing arts, community service, and leadership development. Co-curricular activities are compulsory in Malaysian schools and universities. One of the public universities in Malaysia includes a community service module as part of its co-curricular offerings. This module is specifically designed for students who are in their second semester of a diploma or degree programme.

Participating in co-curricular activities is a crucial aspect of a student's academic advancement. These activities augment the official education provided in classrooms by offering a platform for students to develop essential skills such as leadership, teamwork, time management, and communication. Co-curricular activities enable students to discover and develop their hobbies, hidden talents, and overall personality. Engaging in co-curricular activities, particularly community service, can enhance students' knowledge, attitudes, academic performance, and skills. It will assist students in enhancing their interpersonal skills, which will be beneficial for them when they graduate and enter the professional job market.

1.1 Research Objective

This research is to identify the benefits of co-curricular activities through student participation in community service program.

2.0 LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1 Benefits of Community Service

Studies have shown that engaging in community service has several benefits, including improved mental well-being, the acquisition of new skills, and a deeper understanding of society values. (Dunn, 2018; Imamah, 2022; Rahim, 2023). The benefits of community service are particularly evident in educational settings, as it can enhance learning, promote active engagement in society, and foster a deeper understanding of one's community (Rahim, 2023).

Research has indicated that students who participate in community service activities attain superior academic scores in comparison to their non-engaged counterparts (Belete, 2024; Agurto et al., 2020). Research conducted by Caliwag (2019) has demonstrated that utilizing community service as a teaching approach has a substantial positive impact on student academic achievement and improves the overall quality of instruction. Moreover, students have reported utilizing the skills acquired from community participation workshops in their academic pursuits, resulting in enhanced academic achievements (Kubeka, 2018). Community participation has a positive impact on female students, leading to enhanced empowerment, self-efficacy, and motivation, as observed in a study by (Agurto et al., 2020). These studies jointly emphasize community service and participation as useful means for improving students' academic achievement and personal growth.

2.2 Student's Skill

Research has demonstrated that community service learning has substantial beneficial effects on students' abilities and personal growth. Several research studies have discovered that engaging in community service improves students' social skills, communication aptitude, and feeling of social responsibility (Afzal & Hussain, 2020; Llenares & Deocarís, 2019). According to Llenares and Deocarís (2019), regular volunteers exhibit greater levels of professional competence and ethical responsibility in comparison to non-regular volunteers.

According to Raja et al. (2024), business graduates who engage in community service gain better communication skills and interpersonal development, which enhances their competitiveness in the job market. Community service learning in medical school allows students to apply theoretical information in real-world situations, enhancing their clinical and communication abilities (Nauhria et al., 2021). These discoveries have prompted certain schools to include community service in their curricula, acknowledging its significance in cultivating well-rounded, socially conscientious graduates (Afzal & Hussain, 2020; Nauhria et al., 2021).

2.3 Students Attitude

A study conducted by Syed Yahya et al. (2019) found a strong correlation between students' personalities and their involvement in co-curricular activities. Studies indicate that engaging in community service and service-learning activities can have a beneficial effect on students' attitudes towards participating in community-related activities. Participation in service-learning programs resulted in enhanced attitudes among dental students on their comprehension of community needs and provision of dental treatment (H. A. Bahammam & S. Bahammam, 2023). Psychology students exhibited heightened empathetic attitudes towards poverty following the fulfilment of community service hours (Caswell, 2018). Specifically, community activities contribute positive influence on students' attitudes and personal development. These activities facilitate the cultivation of crucial soft skills, bolster self-assurance, and enhance self-worth, enhanced communication aptitude, advanced critical thinking capabilities, effective problem-solving skills, strengthened teamwork abilities, and refined leadership qualities (Shaharuddin et al., 2021). These activities also enhance character development, foster social connection, and promote community engagement, so serving as valuable elements of the educational experience (Shaharuddin et al., 2021).

2.4 Students' Knowledge

Several studies have investigated the effects of community service programs on different facets of society. Christwardana (2022) discovered that these programmes can improve students' understanding and involvement, especially in the realm of chemical engineering. Aliyyah (2018) demonstrated that community service can cultivate entrepreneurial characteristics and improve entrepreneurial knowledge among students, resulting in the creation of innovative business ventures. Research conducted in Japanese higher education has demonstrated that service-learning has a positive impact on students' perception of community service, sense of duty, and knowledge of the collective welfare (Kazunobu Horiuchi, 2020) These studies collectively emphasize the beneficial influence of community service programmes on the development of students' knowledge.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the previous literature review stated in the previous section, the researchers produced a research framework as shown in figure 1. The benefits of co-curricular activities in a community service program include (i) student academics, (ii) knowledge, (iii) skills, and (iv) attitudes. This framework is also in line with the framework developed by Shaharuddin (2021). Students' academic performance in this case includes improving writing and thinking skills, evaluating new ideas and techniques efficiently and preparation for future careers. Meanwhile, students' skills consist of improved cognitive skills, specifically critical thinking, develop communication skills and emphasise teamwork. Students' attitudes learning about time management, helps to accept criticism graciously and eliminates fears and anxieties. Students' knowledge is involved in decision making and provides the avenues of socialisation, self-identification and self-assessment.

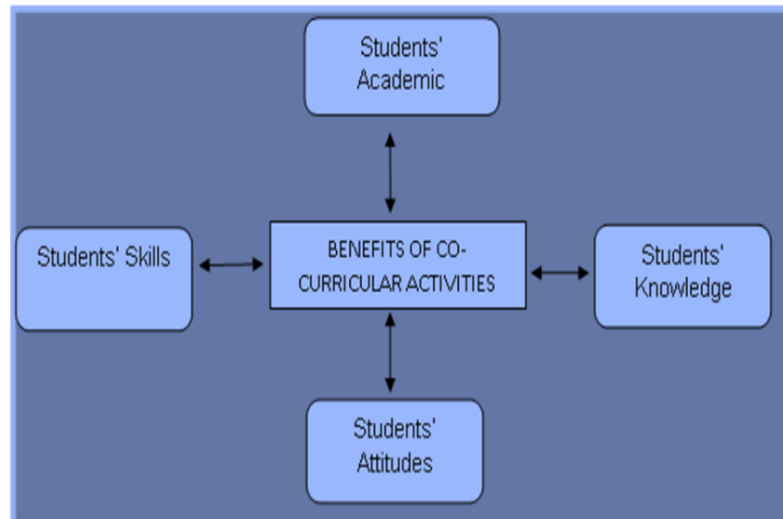


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study – Benefit of Co-Curricular Activities in Community Service

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study was done to identify the four benefits of co-curricular activities through community service programs among students. 154 participants were purposely chosen from a public university in Malaysia. The instrument (refer to table 1) used is a survey adapted from (Villalobos et al., 2016). Apart from the demographic profile in Section A, there are four different benefits of co-curricular activities which are divided in Section B, Section C, Section D and Section E. Section B has ten items measuring for Students' Academic Performance and Section C has ten items on Students' Skills. While section D with ten items on Students' Attitudes and Section E consists of ten items on Students' Knowledge.

All items in Section B, C, D and E are measured by Likert Scale of Studies have shown that engaging in community service has several benefits, including improved mental well-being, the acquisition of new skills, and a deeper understanding of society values. (Dunn, 2018; Imamah, 2022; Rahim, 2023). The benefits of community service are particularly evident in educational settings, as it can enhance learning, promote active engagement in society, and foster a deeper understanding of one's community (Rahim, 2023). One until 5 which indicate 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 1: Distribution of Item in Survey

SECTION	BENEFITS OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	NO. OF ITEM
B	Students' Academic Performance	10
C	Students' Skills	10
D	Students' Attitudes	10
E	Students' Knowledge	10
TOTAL NO. OF ITEM		40

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.973	40

Data was collected via google form and analysed using SPSS version 27. With reference to Table 2, the SPSS analysis revealed a Cronbach analysis of .973. Thus, showing high internal reliability of the instrument used in this study. The data is presented in the form of percentage for the demographic profile and total percentage for agreed scale which is 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) to answer the research objective.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Findings for Demographic Profile

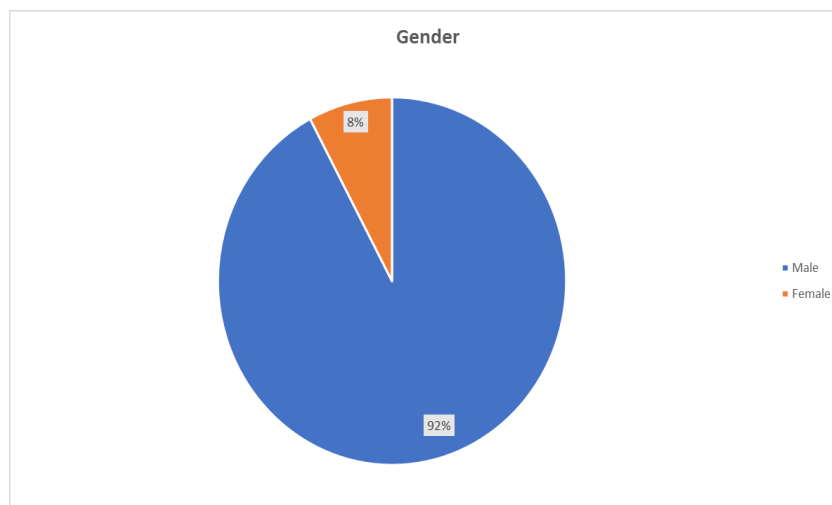


Fig. 2 Percentage for Gender

Based on **Fig. 2**, it shows that out of 154 respondents of the survey, 8 percent are female, and the other 92 percent are male. It shows that male students like to contribute more on community service programme and need outside exposure for their needs in future. This amount not showing any relevancy on gender because student have their right to choose their co-curricular activities they liked and how fast their registered the course.

4.2 Student Programme

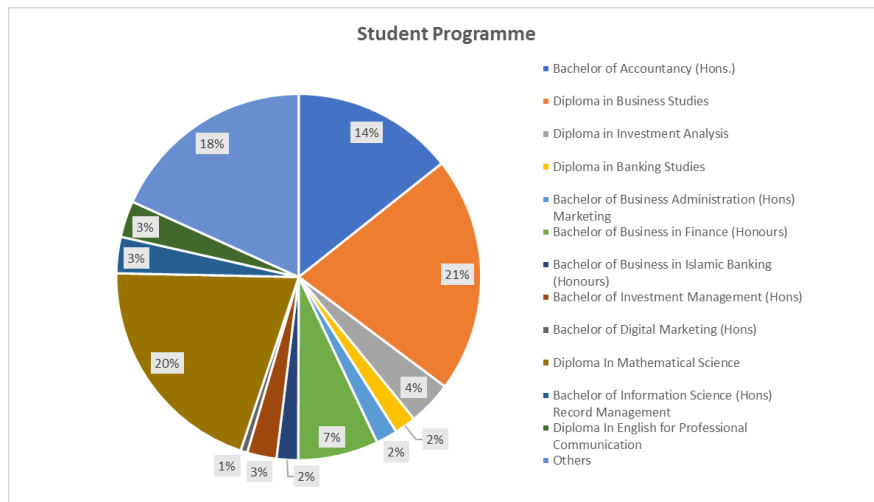


Fig. 3 Percentage for Student Programme

Fig. 3 indicates the percentage of student programmes of the respondents and there are about sixteen student programmes. Sixty-eight percent of them are Diploma students programme and the remaining 32 percent are Degree students' programme. Twenty-one percent student are from the banking course. Students have their right on choosing their co-curricular activities that why the co-curricular department cannot control student selection. The group of students are separate into diploma level and bachelor's degree level.

4.3 Reasons for Involving in Co-curricular Activities.

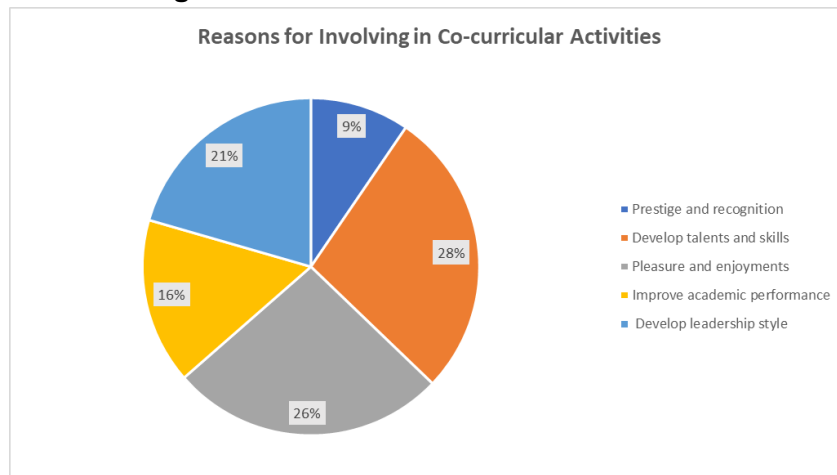


Fig.4 Percentage for Reasons for Involving in Co-curricular Activities.

Fig. 4 presents the percentage of respondents based on their reasons for involving in co-curricular activities. There are five reasons for being involved in co-curricular activities. Developing talents and skills, pleasure and enjoyments and developing leadership style are the main reasons which contribute about 28 per cent, 26 percent, and 21 percent, respectively. Reason for improving academic performance 16 percent and prestige and recognition 9 percent. Students choose this community service program as their co-curricular activity to develop their talents and skills. So that this will be their added value in future to enter the market after graduated. From this list of reason can help this study to evaluate the benefit of involving the community service programme.

4.4 Findings for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Academic Performance

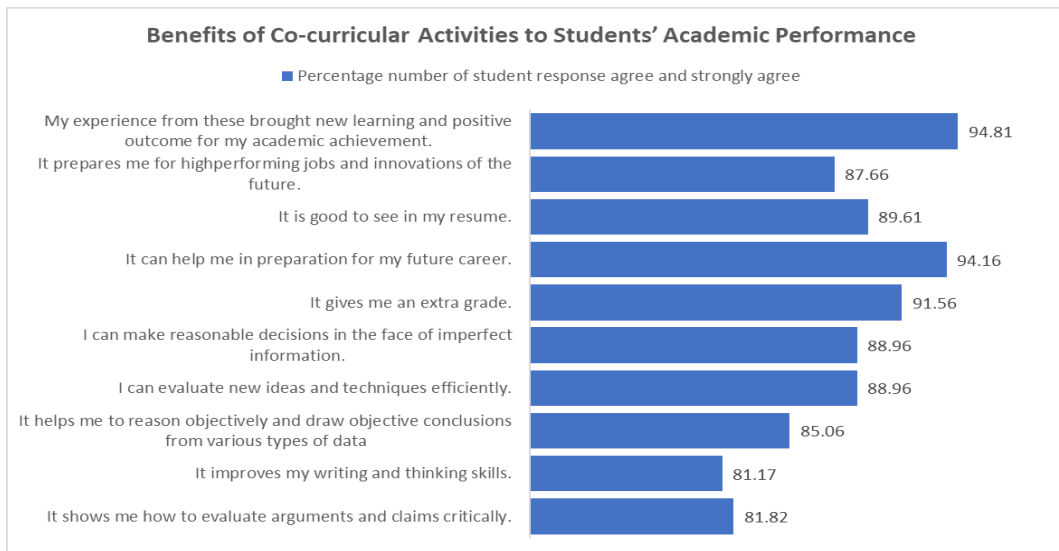


Fig.5: Percentage Agreed for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Academic Performance

Fig. 5 shows the total percentage for agreed which is 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' academic performance. The average percentage agreed for ten items in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' academic performance is 88.5 percent. All indicator is accepted more than 80 percent. It shows that most of the students agree that participating in co-curricular activities can benefit their academic performance. The highest for the academic performance is my experience from these brought new learning and positive outcome for my academic achievement ranked 94.81 percent. This shows that student join community service programme can help to increase their academic performance rather than just joining it without any reason. The lowest items from the Fig. 5 show improves students writing and thinking skills are only 81.17 percent because in this programme does not expose them in writing and attached much in thinking skill and hands on activities. The student only planned their activities during the community service programme that designed by the committee. The average item 88.96 percent shows that student can make reasonable decisions in the face of imperfect information and can evaluate new ideas and techniques efficiently. It helps the students clarify that ideas and techniques efficiently can encourage their academic performance.

4.5 Findings for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Skills

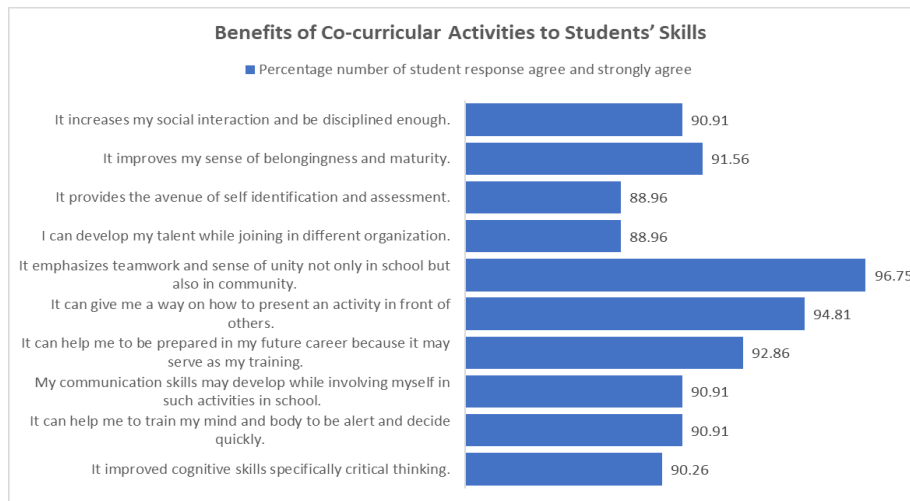


Fig. 6 Percentage Agree for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Skills

Fig.6 shows the total percentage for agreed which is 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' skills. The average percentage agreed for ten items in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' skills is 91.8 percent. Its clarify that the items that near with the average percentage is it improves students' sense of belongingness and maturity 91.56 percent. Community service programme can upgrade the students' skill on their belongingness and increase their maturity for them to act and make decision. Other than that, most of the students agree that participating in co-curricular activities can benefit their skills. The highest item selected by the student is it emphasizes teamwork and sense of unity not only in school but also in community. This shows that student's skill is upgrade as working in teamwork and have an esprit de corp during attending the community service programme. The lowest item has two that are it provides the avenue of self-identification and assessment, and I can develop my talent while joining in different organization shared a same percent 88.96. Even these two items are the lowest, but the score still achieve more than 80 percent. Student think that their self-identification and talent development does not contribute to their skills.

4.6 Findings for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Attitudes

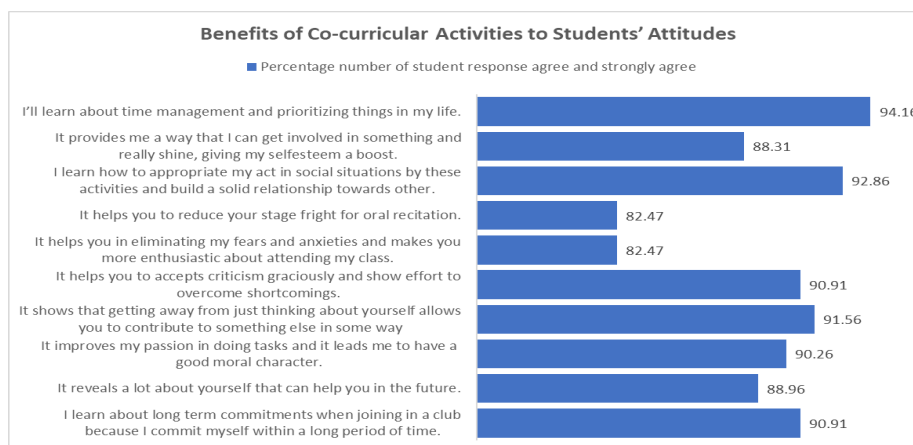


Fig.7: Percentage Agree for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Attitudes

Fig. 7 shows the total percentage for agreed which is 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' attitudes. The average percentage agreed for ten items in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' skills is 89.2 per cent. It shows that most of the students agree that participating in co-curricular activities can benefit their attitudes. The highest item selected by the students is they learn about time management and prioritizing things in my life that is 94.16 percent. Student have benefit on joining the community service programme to change their attitude in managing their personal time and can identify the priority of each activity. The lowest item 82.47 percent has two items contributed to the benefit on students' attitudes are it helps student to reduce their stage fright for oral recitation and the other items is it helps to eliminating student fears and anxieties and make students more enthusiastic about attending their class. For them these two items are lower on impacting their attitudes becomes most of them maybe do not have any problem on their anxiety and fear because they are already familiar joining a programme. The average percentage item is it help the students to accepts criticism graciously and show efforts to overcome shortcomings. Student attitudes can make the student accepts the criticism and put effort on handling the incoming situations.

4.7 Findings for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Knowledge

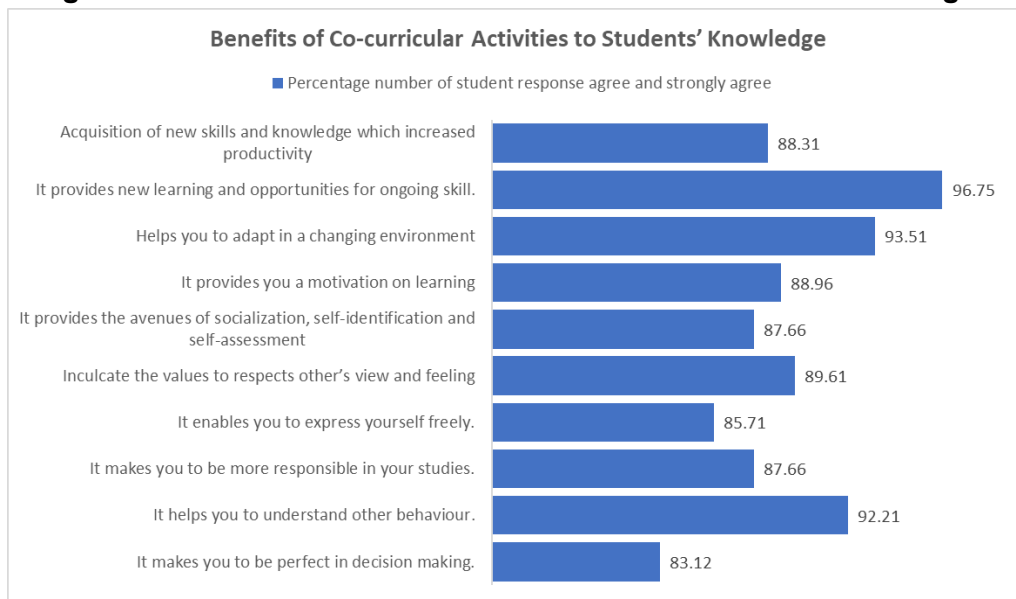


Fig.8- Percentage Agree for Benefits of Co-curricular Activities to Students' Knowledge

Fig. 8 shows the total percentage for agreed which is 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' knowledge. The average percentage agreed for ten items in benefits of co-curricular activities to students' knowledge is 89.5 per cent. It shows that most of the students agree that participating in co-curricular activities can benefit their knowledge. The highest item that contributes to student knowledge is 96.75 percent it provides new learning and opportunities for ongoing skill. Student may feel that joining this community service programme can increase their ongoing skill facing the community outside the university and learn new environment and experience during the program. While the lowest item is 83.12 percent it makes student to be perfect in decision making. Student may feel that all humans are not perfect in life or decision making because they are still in learning process

and need to gain more experience to make a good decision in life. The average item scored by Fig. 8 is 89.61percent shows inculcate the values to respects others' view and feeling can help the student knowledge better and help increase their maturity.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Student engagement in community activities is now highly valued in university curricula since the university believes students' involvement in these activities will have numerous positive effects. This study aims to identify the benefits of co-curricular activities through student participation in community service programs. The findings of this study show that the involvement of students in community service programmes has a positive impact and useful for the students benefits. The first benefit is the student's academic performance. They agree that the experience gained from the involvement of such programmes adds new knowledge that will have a positive impact on their academic achievement. Besides, it also helps students prepare early for their future careers. The second benefit of this study is the enhancement of students' skills. They strongly agreed that the program would be a good platform for them to learn to work as a teamwork together with an individual they did not know before. This community service programme also makes them braver to make presentations or communicate in front of the crowd or the community itself. In addition, it improves their cognitive skills especially on critical thinking and increase their decision-making skill. Third benefit is enhancing students' attitude. Students agree that their involvement in this community service program trains them to be more respectful of time and know which actions they need to pay more attention to and attend first. They can prioritize their activities and plan their time in the daily routine. The last benefit of this study is enhancing students' knowledge. Surprisingly, students strongly agree this programme helps them to adapt in a new environment setting. Quick adaptation is much needed as involvement in this kind of activity will expose the participant with risk and circumstances that are sometimes out of our control. They prepared themselves to face a new environment and seek opportunities to increase their knowledge for their future preparation and daily life.

6.0 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Selecting a sample from the community itself can help to expand the study's context. The advantages of community service participation for both the student and the community they serve may then be compared. In addition, future research also can be done to measure the benefits of involvement in community service towards career development.

CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author1 carried out the fieldwork and the introduction of the study, Author2 prepared the literature review and overlook the writeup of the whole article. Author3 wrote the research methodology and did the data entry. Author4 carried out the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results. Author4 interpretation of the results and make conclusions. Author5 overlooked the writeup of the whole article.

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