



## Research article

# Factors impeding university students' participation in English extracurricular activities: Time constraints and personal obstacles

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## ABSTRACT

The incorporation of extracurricular activities (ECAs) that focus on the English language is of utmost importance in higher education as it serves to improve students' interpersonal abilities and proficiency in language. The objective of this study is to ascertain the primary variables that serve as deterrents to the active engagement of university students in these activities. The results highlight notable barriers, including limited time availability and individual issues such as diminished self-assurance in social engagements and restricted competency in the English language. The findings of this study have significant significance for individuals learning a new language and organizers of English language immersion programmes. The research provides valuable insights into the creation of immersive environments that effectively facilitate language acquisition, experiential learning, and enhanced social interactions among students.

## 1. Introduction

English extracurricular activities (English ECAs) have become a vital component of English language instruction in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) [1–3]. Students in such contexts often face challenges in enhancing their linguistic competence and sustaining their engagement due to limited opportunities for English language practice beyond the classroom [4,5]. To address this issue, a variety of English ECAs, particularly those led by native English speakers, have been proposed to help students improve their foreign language proficiency. These activities encompass a range of tasks, including presentations, debates, meetings, role play, and interviews [6,7].

In recent years, there has been a growing body of scholarly research dedicated to examining the significance of English extracurricular activities (English ECAs) and their impact on students [8–10]. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable gap in comprehensive research concerning the various factors that hinder students' engagement in English extracurricular activities (ECAs). This study aims to address this gap and offers a distinctive contribution to the field.

The primary distinction of this study lies in its focus on uncovering the specific barriers and demotivating factors that impede students' active participation in English ECAs. By delving into these hindrances, such as time constraints and personal challenges, this research provides valuable insights for the development of strategies and interventions aimed at enhancing student engagement and overcoming these obstacles. The findings from this study will inform the design and implementation of English ECAs that are better tailored to students' needs, fostering language acquisition and promoting social interaction.

In essence, the study's significance lies in its potential to contribute to the creation of an English language learning environment that not only facilitates learning but also boosts students' confidence and strengthens social connections. Ultimately, it is poised to

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make a substantial contribution by identifying and addressing the obstacles that hinder students' involvement in English ECAs, thus enriching the landscape of English language education.

This study addresses what factors demotivate students to participate in English ECAs at a private university in Vietnam. Thus, the primary concern of this investigation pertains to the subsequent inquiry.

1. What factors impede student participation in English ECAs?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities, as defined by The Glossary of Education Reform (2013), encompass a diverse array of offerings or arrangements provided by educational institutions that exist outside the realm of formal academic instruction. While these activities are frequently associated with sports and athletics, they also encompass non-athletic pursuits, such as music, speech, and debate. The broader academic community has recognized co-curricular and extracurricular activities as valuable supplements that contribute to the emotional, physical, and moral development of students [11–13]. Research conducted in high schools in North Carolina underscores the positive impact of participation in extracurricular activities on academic outcomes [14]. Remarkably, this association remains significant even when controlling for school resources. Several studies, namely [15–17] emphasize that extracurricular activities constitute a substantial component of education, offering experiences that extend beyond the formal curriculum. Their findings demonstrate that these activities are crucial for skill development, bearing a level of significance comparable to that of regular academic classes.

[18] further bolsters the argument for the educational significance of extracurricular activities. He posits that these activities offer students substantial opportunities to pursue their academic objectives while honing their talents and skills. The prevailing perception of extracurricular activities as non-academic belies their crucial role in fostering students' cognitive, interpersonal, and ethical development. Through participation in these activities, students have the chance to enhance their communicative competence and gain valuable insights into various facets of life, ultimately contributing to their holistic growth and enriched learning experiences [19–21].

Moreover [22], underscore that extracurricular activities can foster leadership skills, teamwork, and personal growth, serving as a bridge between the theoretical knowledge acquired in formal education and practical application. Similarly, a study by [23] found that participation in such activities positively correlates with increased self-confidence, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and a greater sense of belonging within the school community.

In summary, extracurricular activities extend beyond mere leisure pursuits. They are integral to a student's holistic development, providing opportunities for academic and personal growth, interpersonal skill development, and the acquisition of valuable life lessons. These activities, far from being a mere supplement to formal education, play a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded, capable individuals.

### 2.2. Existing research studies on motivation in English extracurricular activities

In order to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of the research, it is imperative to incorporate triangulation and comparative analysis of prior studies. Existing studies have extensively explored the driving forces behind student participation in English extracurricular activities. The influential motives identified in previous research can be summarized as follows.

#### 2.2.1. Desire for professional development

Recent studies by [24–27] underscore students' motivation to engage in English ECAs with the aim of achieving outcomes related to their professional profile and experience. While these studies shed light on the motivation for professional development as a driving factor behind English ECA participation, there are opportunities to delve deeper into the specifics of students' professional aspirations and to consider the context in which these motivations arise. Additionally, a more comprehensive understanding would encompass a broader array of motivations for participation in English ECAs, ensuring a more holistic view of the subject.

#### 2.2.2. Social interaction and skill development

[28–30] emphasize the aspiration of students to foster social interactions and acquire new skills through participation in English ECAs. The aforementioned research underscores the significance of social contact and skill development as factors that drive involvement in English ECA. However, further investigation is warranted to delve into context-specific exploration and provide a comprehensive comprehension of these ideas. Furthermore, a more thorough comprehension would entail considering a broader spectrum of reasons in order to obtain a full perspective on the subject matter.

#### 2.2.3. Foreign language acquisition

[31–33] recognize English ECAs as a beneficial avenue for foreign language acquisition, motivating students to participate. These studies provide a persuasive rationale for the involvement of English extracurricular activities (ECAs) in promoting the acquisition of foreign languages. However, there exist prospects for further investigation into the precise effects on language proficiency, undertaking comparative examinations, and taking into account the influence of contextual variations. A more comprehensive

understanding would encompass a broader array of motivations for participation in English ECAs, ensuring a more holistic view of the subject.

#### 2.2.4. *Personal interest and strength enhancement*

[34–37] highlight the role of personal interests in motivating students to enhance their individual strengths through participation in English ECAs. However, such studies may not fully consider the potential variation in individual interests and strengths across different contexts, cultures, and age groups. This variation can significantly impact the effectiveness of ECA programs and should be explored in more depth.

#### 2.2.5. *Self-improvement and career development*

Research by [38–40] underscores students' pursuit of self-improvement and career development through involvement in these activities. Although these studies emphasize self-improvement and career development, they may not delve deeply into the specific aspects of self-improvement and career goals that motivate students. A more detailed exploration of these aspects would provide a richer context for understanding the motivations.

While the motivating factors are well-documented, it is equally vital to explore the deterrents that hinder students from participating in English ECAs. Several significant factors demotivating students from engaging in these activities have been revealed in prior research.

#### 2.2.6. *Socioeconomic status*

Studies by [41–44] indicate that learners from middle or higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement in English ECAs. However, the influence of socioeconomic status on ECA participation can vary based on cultural and educational contexts. These studies may not fully capture the nuances of these contextual variations, which could be essential for tailoring ECA programs to meet diverse needs.

#### 2.2.7. *Financial and time constraints*

Research by [45–48] points to financial and time constraints as substantial barriers to participation, as non-academic activities often require financial resources and consume significant time. Whilst these studies indicate that financial and time constraints are barriers, they may not delve deeply into the specific ways in which these constraints impact participation or explore potential solutions to mitigate them. A more detailed analysis of these aspects would provide a richer context for understanding the challenges.

#### 2.2.8. *Lack of parental involvement*

[44,49,50] highlight the impact of limited parental involvement, as parents may fail to recognize the benefits of English ECAs or understand the connection between academics and extracurricular activities. Although these studies indicate the impact of limited parental involvement, they may not delve deeply into the specific ways in which this lack of involvement affects student participation. A more detailed examination of these impacts would provide a richer context for understanding the challenges.

#### 2.2.9. *Ineffective organization and limited information*

[51–53] draw attention to the role of ineffective organization and limited information about English ECAs as demotivating factors. Such research suggests that inadequate organization and insufficient information operate as demotivating elements, they may not comprehensively explore the precise mechanisms via which these concerns impact student engagement. A comprehensive analysis of these effects would offer a more nuanced framework for comprehending the difficulties at hand.

#### 2.2.10. *Transportation issues*

Transportation challenges, such as reliance on school buses or public transportation, are underscored in studies by [44,54]. These studies highlight the significance of transport difficulties as obstacles to involvement in English extracurricular activities (ECAs). However, there exist prospects for examining the precise effects of these challenges, taking into account variations in transport problems within diverse contexts, and conducting further investigations into the motivations and barriers that affect student engagement. A fuller comprehension would entail considering a wider range of factors that influence involvement.

#### 2.2.11. *Cultural differences*

Research by [52,55,56] highlights disparities in cultural values as contributors to nonparticipation. Nonetheless, the focus on cultural differences may unintentionally overshadow other noteworthy factors that impact kids' engagement in extracurricular activities. A more exhaustive examination would entail considering a wider range of variables that influence involvement.

Upon reviewing the existing literature, it becomes apparent that time constraints consistently emerge as the primary demotivating factor affecting students' motivation to engage in English extracurricular activities (English ECAs). Conversely, the influence of limited parental engagement appears relatively subdued. This finding suggests that the constraint of limited time availability significantly hinders student participation, while the degree of parental involvement seems to exert a comparatively lesser influence. These findings underscore the need for interventions that address time-related constraints to enhance student engagement in English ECAs.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research design and instruments

The research design for this study was meticulously constructed based on a mixed-methods approach, specifically employing an explanatory sequential design that prioritizes the quantitative phase before the qualitative phase [57]. This methodological choice was driven by a well-founded rationale that aims to yield a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the motivating and demotivating factors influencing students' participation in English extracurricular activities (English ECAs). The initial phase, the quantitative component, was initiated with the systematic administration of a comprehensive survey to a sizable cohort of students enrolled at a private university in Vietnam. This survey was purposefully chosen for its ability to provide a structured, numerical analysis of the factors guiding students' decisions to engage in English ECAs. By leveraging a survey in this phase, the researcher aimed to accumulate a substantial and diverse dataset of responses, ensuring that the study incorporated a representative sample of the student population. This survey component allowed for the quantitative examination of trends, patterns, and statistical relationships within the data.

Subsequently, the qualitative phase followed, involving in-depth interviews with a thoughtfully selected subset of participants who had previously completed the survey. The purpose of this qualitative phase was to delve deeper into the nuances of students' experiences and motivations. Through these interviews, the researcher sought to extract rich and context-specific responses that would complement and enhance the insights gained from the quantitative data obtained through the survey. In doing so, the qualitative component served as a vital means of exploring the "how" and "why" behind the quantitative findings, offering a more profound and comprehensive understanding of the motivations that drive students' participation in English ECAs.

The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a more robust and triangulated exploration of the research question, enabling a holistic analysis of the multifaceted factors influencing student engagement in English ECAs. This mixed methods approach not only provides breadth in terms of sample representation and numerical data but also depth in terms of individual perspectives, context, and nuanced experiences [58]. By seamlessly combining survey data with interviews, the research design was reinforced, strengthening the justification for this methodological choice and enhancing the rigor of the study.

#### 3.2. Participants

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select the sample, targeting Business students enrolled in business English courses at a private university in Vietnam. The primary objective of this research was to explore the demotivating factors that impact the participation of these students in English extracurricular activities (English ECAs). Following the obtainment of consent from the respective lecturers, the researcher distributed questionnaires to five business English classes, which yielded a total of 143 responses. The strategic selection of Business students from these specific classes was instrumental in securing a representative sample for the study, thereby enabling the acquisition of insights that are specifically relevant to the target population. Informed consent was duly obtained from all study participants, ensuring their voluntary engagement and the confidentiality of their data, solely utilized for research objectives. Participants retained the right to exit the study at any juncture. The research received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of FPT University, Ho Chi Minh Campus, Vietnam, under the approval reference 307/QĐ-FPTUHCM.

#### 3.3. Data collection procedure

The survey instrument used in this study consisted of a questionnaire comprising 15 closed-ended questions (Appendix A), which were measured on a Likert scale [59]. The development of the questionnaire drew upon the motivation model proposed by [60] and relevant previous research cited in the literature review, with slight modifications based on external observations. To ensure clarity and reliability of responses, the survey's instructions and research purposes were explicitly stated in the introductory section of the questionnaire. Participants were informed about the nature of the study and its objectives. The collected survey data were securely stored for subsequent analysis.

In order to gain a deeper understanding and obtain explanatory insights from the target subjects, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants via Google Meet. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, allowing interviewees to freely express themselves in their native language. Prior to recording the interviews, participants were asked for their consent, and the recordings were used for further analysis.

#### 3.4. Data analysis

The data analysis process comprised four distinct stages.

- 1. Categorization of Responses:** In this initial stage, the collected questionnaire responses are classified into two primary categories: students who have previously engaged in English extracurricular activities (ECAs) and those who have not participated in any English ECAs. This categorization sets the foundation for a comparative analysis of these two groups.
- 2. Data Import and Visualization:** After the categorization, the data is imported into Google Sheets. Tables and charts are generated to visually represent and facilitate an in-depth analysis of the perspectives and viewpoints expressed by students in both groups. These visual aids help in highlighting trends and patterns within the dataset.

3. **Selection of Interviewees:** The utilization of the gathered survey data significantly influences the selection of interview participants. Eight participants are chosen based on the identification of responses that are considered valuable and pertinent to the research. This stage involves the selection of individuals who can provide additional insights and responses relevant to the research goals.
4. **Semi-Structured Interviews and Analysis:** Semi-structured interviews are conducted with the selected participants, providing them with the opportunity to elaborate on their responses and address inquiries aligned with the research objectives. Comprehensive notes are diligently recorded during the interview process and used to analyze the interview recordings. This stage aims to extract crucial information that can be utilized to compare and elucidate trends observed in the data tables.

These four stages collectively form the comprehensive data analysis process in the research.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Survey findings

The present study involved an examination of the various factors that contribute to a decrease in motivation to participate in English extracurricular activities (ECAs). This examination was accomplished by incorporating the results and conclusions of previous research studies, as presented in the literature review. The present study incorporated additional observations and modifications to complement the obtained findings. The demotivating factors that were identified were subsequently classified into six distinct groups, specifically time restrictions, insufficient parents' support, monetary constraints, unprofessional organizational practices, transportation challenges, and personal reasons. The utilization of this categorization facilitated a methodical analysis of the diverse elements that impede students' motivation to participate in English extracurricular activities. The study sought to enhance the existing body of knowledge by examining various categories and their implications on barriers to participation, with the ultimate goal of achieving a comprehensive understanding. The mean scores of such factors were depicted in [Table 1](#).

[Table 1](#) presents the mean scores for different factors affecting student participation in English ECAs, highlighting the prominent barriers as indicated by the respondents. Among these factors, time constraint emerges as the primary barrier with a mean score of 3.22, followed closely by personal reasons with a mean score of 3.15.

Regarding time constraints, students perceive a lack of available time due to their busy study schedules (mean score = 3.56), and they also face the challenge of English ECAs conflicting with their class schedule (mean score = 3.23). These findings suggest that students perceive time limitations as a significant obstacle to their participation in English ECAs. In terms of personal reasons, students express a lack of confidence in their English language skills (mean score = 3.24) and feel a sense of shyness when it comes to public engagement (mean score = 3.41). Additionally, some students believe that they lack the necessary talents to participate in English ECAs (mean score = 3.16). These findings indicate that students' personal factors, such as self-perceived language proficiency, social confidence, and perceived talents, contribute to their reluctance in joining English ECAs. This analysis of the data provides insights into the specific concerns and challenges faced by students in relation to time constraints and personal factors. These findings highlight the importance of addressing these barriers in order to encourage greater student participation in English ECAs. By understanding these underlying issues, educators and program organizers can develop targeted strategies and interventions to mitigate these barriers and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for students to engage in English ECAs.

The findings of this study align with the initial hypothesis, highlighting two major categories of demotivating factors: time constraints and personal reasons. The majority of respondents expressed that time limitations were the primary barrier to their nonparticipation in English ECAs. Students reported difficulties in balancing their study and work commitments, making it challenging to allocate time for extracurricular activities. Moreover, the scheduling of some activities overlapped with their school timetable. This finding is consistent with previous research by [\[61,62\]](#), which emphasize the time-consuming nature of extracurricular activities and

**Table 1**  
Students' demotivating factors on ECAs participation.

Categories	Statement	Mean	Average Mean Score
<i>Time restrictions</i>	1. My study is too busy for participating in ECAs	3.56	<b>3.22</b>
	2. I think participating in ECAs affects my study	2.98	
	3. I can't manage time between study and joining ECAs	3.11	
	4. ECAs coincide with my class schedules	3.23	
<i>Insufficient parents' support</i>	5. My parents don't recognize the benefits of ECAs	2.35	<b>2.35</b>
<i>Monetary constraints</i>	6. Participating in ECAs might cost a lot	2.13	
<i>Unprofessional organizational practices</i>	7. ECAs are not attractive to students	2.31	<b>2.53</b>
	8. The ECAs organization is unprofessional	2.16	
	9. I am not informed properly about the schedules of ECAs	2.87	
<i>Transportation challenges</i>	10. I don't recognize the value of ECAs	2.79	<b>2.75</b>
	11. I don't have personal transportation for ECAs participation	2.75	
<i>Personal reasons</i>	12. I feel shy in public	3.41	<b>3.15</b>
	13. My English is not good for ECAs	3.24	
	14. I can't cooperate with other participants	2.78	
	15. I don't have any talents for participating ECAs	3.16	

their impact on students' time availability, including family time. In contrast to the expectations based on the literature, parental involvement was identified as a minor factor influencing students' participation decisions. While [44,50] found parental involvement to be a significant factor, this study's results suggest that participants of this study perceive parental involvement as less influential. This discrepancy may be attributed to cultural differences or the specific context of the study population.

The present research also revealed personal issues as significant demotivating factors, which have not been extensively explored in previous studies. Lack of confidence in social interaction and English language proficiency emerged as the primary personal reasons hindering participation. Additionally, factors such as laziness, inactive characteristics, and long travel distances were reported to contribute to students' unwillingness to join or commit to English ECAs. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing students' self-confidence and motivation to overcome personal barriers to participation.

Furthermore, the study identified unprofessional organization and a lack of information as demotivating factors for students. This finding is consistent with Yildiz's study (2016), which highlighted the shortage of information and the limited awareness of the beneficial effects of English ECAs as deterrents to participation [30]. The study also identified unprofessionalism in organizing specialized skills development activities as a demotivating factor, further emphasizing the need for effective organization and communication to enhance student engagement.

#### 4.2. Interview findings

The analysis of the interviews with eight participants shed further light on the factors hindering their participation in extracurricular activities, specifically English ECAs. The findings revealed a consistent theme among the participants, with time limitation emerging as the primary reason for their non-participation. All eight participants mentioned their busy study schedules and other commitments as barriers to engaging in extracurricular activities. They expressed concerns about balancing their academic workload and part-time jobs, as well as additional language learning classes, which left them with limited time for outside activities.

"... I don't have time for outside class activities since I am busy with my study and part-time jobs ..." (SS3)

"... My study schedule is tight with many classes and extra classes after school since I am learning Chinese in a language center ... " (SS5)

"... I am not good at managing time, so I can't study and participating extra activities after classes since I have a lot of assignments and projects in my study." (SS8)

Furthermore, five out of the eight interviewees highlighted a lack of confidence in showcasing their abilities in front of a crowd as a significant deterrent. They expressed feelings of shyness, nervousness, and self-doubt when it came to participating in activities that required public presentation or performance.

"I am very shy when standing on the stage ..." (SS2)

"I am quite nervous and clumsy in the crowd, so I don't want to join in ECAs." (SS6)

Some participants expressed a belief that they lacked specific talents or skills, such as singing, dancing, or debating, which they perceived as necessary for participation in competitions. This self-perception of lacking abilities contributed to their reluctance to engage in extracurricular activities.

"I can't sing or dance. I can't speak English well." (SS5)

"I find myself not having any abilities for contests at my university." (SS7)

"My English is not really good, especially in speaking and writing." (SS1)

"I am not confident with my English. I can speak English in my class, but I am not sure if taking part in an event or a competition." (SS8)

Additionally, a few participants raised concerns about the professionalism of certain events or activities. They mentioned issues such as inadequate information dissemination, tight deadlines for submissions, and dissatisfaction with the cost-benefit ratio, where the effort and time invested did not align with the perceived value of the events or competitions.

These findings reveal a complex landscape of factors that exert influence on student participation in English extracurricular activities (English ECAs). The predominant theme of time limitation underscores the pressing need for educational institutions to implement strategies that address this challenge effectively. One significant implication is the necessity for flexible scheduling and time management support systems that can accommodate students' academic and personal commitments. This might involve offering a range of time slots for ECAs, prioritizing evening or weekend options, or providing tools and guidance for improved time management.

The issue of self-confidence that emerged as a demotivating factor points to the potential for targeted interventions. Educational institutions and ECA organizers can explore initiatives such as public speaking workshops, mentorship programs, or self-confidence building activities to help students overcome inhibitions and become more active participants. These interventions can significantly impact students' personal and professional growth, extending beyond the confines of ECAs.

In addition, the significance of professionalism in ECA organization becomes evident. Clear communication, well-defined deadlines, and ensuring that the perceived value of participation matches the effort required are key components. This highlights the

importance of meticulous planning and execution, as well as fostering a culture of accountability among organizers. These aspects are crucial for enhancing student engagement.

Moving forward, educators, instructors, and policymakers can utilize this data to formulate targeted strategies. For instance, they can work towards creating flexible scheduling options, facilitating workshops and support mechanisms to address self-confidence issues, and refining the organization of ECAs. By understanding the underlying factors and the preferences expressed by students, they can develop interventions and create supportive environments that cater to students' needs and concerns. This, in turn, encourages active engagement and elevates the overall quality of English ECAs.

The insights derived from interviewees regarding the preferences for experts in the field rather than celebrity hosts, the effective use of media channels, and the students' favoring of certificates over other incentives offer actionable guidance for ECA organizers. These recommendations can be instrumental in enhancing the design and promotion of English ECAs, attracting more participants, and aligning rewards and incentives with students' expectations. In this way, the data not only highlights challenges but also presents concrete solutions and avenues for improvement that can be embraced by educators, instructors, and policymakers to foster increased student engagement in English ECAs.

Furthermore, as each student may have different interests, it is crucial to provide a diverse range of clubs and ECAs based on students' preferences. This aligns with the recommendation of [63] to offer a variety of options tailored to individual interests. Additionally, educational institutions should establish clear aims for ECAs and ensure that participants' expectations are met. This can be achieved through small talk sessions that outline the program's objectives and how it will be conducted, as suggested by Ref. [64]. The recommendations provided in this study offer valuable insights for English ECA organizers. By considering students' opinions, interests, and preferences, organizers can design and implement ECAs that effectively engage students and align with their expectations. It is recommended that future research investigate the effectiveness of these recommendations when applied to determine their impact on student participation and motivation in English ECAs.

Educators, instructors, and policymakers can leverage the insights from this research to address the challenges and enhance student engagement in English extracurricular activities (ECAs) through several strategic approaches. Firstly, it is crucial to provide a diverse range of clubs and ECAs based on students' preferences, as each student may have different interests. This recommendation aligns with [63]'s suggestion to offer a variety of options tailored to individual interests. Educational institutions should collaborate with students to identify their interests and create a diverse range of options. This can be implemented by forming student clubs or organizations that cater to a broad spectrum of interests. Additionally, institutions can regularly survey students to gauge their evolving interests and adjust ECA offerings accordingly. Secondly, educational institutions should establish clear aims for ECAs and ensure that participants' expectations are met. This can be achieved through transparent and informative sessions, such as small talk meetings, which outline the program's goals and how it will be conducted, as recommended by [64]. These sessions serve as platforms for organizers to articulate the purpose of the ECA and what students can expect to gain from their participation.

By considering students' opinions, interests, and preferences, organizers can design and implement ECAs that effectively engage students and align with their expectations. To ensure alignment, educational institutions should actively solicit feedback from participants and use this feedback to refine and adapt their ECA offerings over time. This dynamic approach enhances the relevance and appeal of these activities. As a future step, it is recommended that researchers investigate the effectiveness of these recommendations when applied in practice. Research studies can be designed to assess the impact of these strategies on student participation and motivation in English ECAs. The findings from such research can further inform educators, instructors, and policymakers on the most effective approaches for boosting student engagement.

In conclusion, educators, instructors, and policymakers can use this data to shape a more responsive and engaging ECA environment. By actively involving students in the selection and design of ECAs, setting clear expectations, and regularly assessing and adapting offerings, institutions can overcome challenges and create a thriving ECA ecosystem that enhances student engagement and enriches their overall educational experience.

## 5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine the factors that act as barriers to student participation in English extracurricular activities (ECAs) at a private university in Vietnam. The preceding sections have provided an overview of the findings and discussions, emphasizing the noteworthy obstacles to participation, namely time constraints and personal reasons. Based on the aforementioned findings, it is imperative for institutions to proactively address the identified demotivating factors and implement strategic measures to effectively attract participants. In order to mitigate the challenge posed by limited time availability, a number of pragmatic measures might be implemented. Institutions ought to accord priority to enhancing communication channels and facilitating the transmission of precise information pertaining to the schedules of English extracurricular activities (ECAs). Students can depend on reliable sources, such as educators and classmates, to proficiently transmit this information to their peers. This measure has the potential to alleviate difficulties pertaining to conflicting schedules and promote the development of students' time management abilities. Furthermore, institutions have the ability to strategically choose suitable time slots and handy places for English extracurricular activities (ECAs). The strategic option at hand holds significant importance in facilitating the ability of students to effectively manage their academic obligations alongside personal commitments, hence fostering their active engagement in extracurricular activities.

When examining individual motivations, institutions may find it beneficial to take into account the subsequent practical recommendations. The implementation of peer support mentorship programmes has the potential to assist students in overcoming their fears and fostering a sense of competence. Peer mentors play a crucial role in offering direction, encouragement, and building a sense of belonging, thereby cultivating a supportive environment for individuals involved. Furthermore, providing opportunities for skill

development can effectively support students in enhancing their self-confidence and motivation for active participation. Workshops, training sessions, and skill-building activities have the potential to enhance students' abilities and self-assurance, enabling them to actively engage in extracurricular activities.

In brief, the findings of this study suggest that the participation of students in English Extracurricular Activities (ECAs) is notably impacted by constraints on time and individual motives. In order to increase rates of participation and improve the quality of English extracurricular activities (ECAs), educational institutions may choose to explore implementing the practical recommendations provided earlier. The enhancement of student engagement and participation in English extracurricular activities (ECAs) can be achieved through the use of effective communication methods, educated scheduling practices, and tailored initiatives that address individual impediments. As a result, these endeavours possess the capacity to enhance pupils' comprehensive learning encounters, augment their linguistic aptitude, and establish a more captivating and nurturing educational milieu.

The findings of this study shed light on the critical factors influencing student participation in English extracurricular activities (ECAs). Moving forward, there are several avenues for future research in this area. Firstly, a longitudinal study could be conducted to track the impact of the practical suggestions outlined in the conclusion over an extended period, providing insights into their long-term effectiveness. Secondly, a comparative analysis of different educational institutions and cultural contexts could reveal variations in the demotivating factors and strategies for boosting participation. Furthermore, exploring the role of technology, such as online ECAs, in overcoming time constraints and promoting engagement could be a promising area of study. As for limitations, this research focused on a specific university in Vietnam, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to other institutions or regions. Additionally, the study's scope did not encompass the perspectives of educators or organizers of ECAs, which could offer valuable insights into the design and implementation of these activities. Addressing these limitations and delving into the future research avenues can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of student participation in English ECAs.

**Availability of data and materials**

Any datasets will be applied if required.

**Additional information**

No additional information is available for this paper.

**CRedit authorship contribution statement**

**Ha Van Le:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

**Declaration of competing interest**

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Appendix A. Questionnaire**

1. How many English extracurricular activities have you participated in at FPT University? Please put (v) into the box that is the most suitable for you.
  - A. I have never participated in English extracurricular activities
  - B. 1–2 activities
  - C. more than 2 activities
2. Factors that demotivate students in English ECAs participation. Please put (v) into the box that is the most suitable for you.

I don't participate in English ECAs because:	1: Strongly Disagree - 5: Strongly Agree				
Items	1	2	3	4	5
1. My study is too busy for participating in ECAs					
2. I think participating in ECAs affects my study					
3. I can't manage time between study and joining ECAs					
4. ECAs coincide with my class schedules					
5. My parents don't recognize the benefits of ECAs					
6. Participating in ECAs might cost a lot					
7. ECAs are not attractive to students					
8. The ECAs organization is unprofessional					

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(continued)

Items	1: Strongly Disagree - 5: Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am not informed properly about the schedules of ECAs					
10. I don't recognize the value of ECAs					
11. I don't have personal transportation for ECAs participation					
12. I feel shy in public					
13. My English is not good for ECAs					
14. I can't cooperate with other participants					
15. I don't have any talents for participating ECAs					

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