

The Meaning of Student Involvement in Organizations Amidst Academic Responsibilities

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Abstract:

This study aims to understand the meaning of student involvement in organizations amidst academic busyness. Involvement in student organizations is expected to significantly contribute to the development of academic skills and soft skills necessary for the workforce. Using a qualitative approach and phenomenological design, this research explores students' subjective experiences related to their participation in organizations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the benefits, challenges, and impacts of organizational involvement on students' academic and personal lives. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, resulting in patterns that describe students' experiences, including how they manage time and balance academic commitments with organizational activities. The findings indicate that involvement in organizations not only helps students develop leadership skills but also contributes to psychological well-being and the development of professional identity. This study provides recommendations for educational institutions to encourage active student participation in organizations to maximize their potential in facing challenges in higher education.

Keywords: *Student Involvement, Organizations, Academics, Personal Development.*

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to equip their students with a set of skills, both hard skills and soft skills, so that they can work according to labor market demands and interact well within society. The development of these skills is not only obtained in lecture halls but also through organizational activities, both at the institutional level and within departments and study programs.

Student organizations in universities play a crucial role in supporting students' self-development, especially in leadership aspects. Organizational activities focus more on the "learning by doing" approach rather than "learning by theory." This aligns with research conducted by Furedy & Furedy (1985), which states that in order to design learning situations that develop critical thinking skills, students need to be actively involved in practicing critical thinking rather than merely observing it.

Research conducted by Purwanto (2017) found that student engagement in the Office Administration Education Student Association (HIMA ADP) is a significant factor in supporting both academic and non-academic potential development. Participation in organizations provides students with valuable experience in leadership, communication, and time management skills. The study revealed that student engagement in organizations positively impacts academic achievement, contributing 23%. However, challenges such as

balancing organizational activities with academic responsibilities often affect students' learning effectiveness, making time management crucial. Furthermore, study discipline contributes 17.2% to academic achievement, making it an essential factor in students' academic success. Students who are active in organizations but can maintain discipline, such as attending lectures on time and completing assignments properly, tend to achieve better academic performance. Overall, the study found that organizational engagement and study discipline collectively contribute 23.1% to academic achievement, while the remaining 76.9% is influenced by other factors outside the study, such as family support or intrinsic motivation.

Students actively involved in organizations are expected to enhance their academic achievements. Organizational involvement provides valuable experiences beyond the lecture materials delivered by professors. These experiences include increased confidence in expressing opinions, improved reading habits, and the ability to present ideas, criticisms, or suggestions in public (Purwanto, 2017). Students engaged in organizational activities must balance their responsibilities between organizational commitments and academic achievements. According to Ahmadi & Supriyono (2013), academic performance is the result of interactions between various factors, both internal (personal) and external (environmental).

Student participation in campus organizations can serve as a medium for creating an inclusive campus environment that accommodates the diverse needs of students from various backgrounds. An inclusive campus environment plays a key role in fostering positive student experiences, strengthening motivation, and enhancing student performance in organizational activities (Celik & Ozenc-Ira, 2024). These findings emphasize the importance of a strategic approach in managing campus organizations to support students' academic success. Through organizational activities, students can learn time management, adapt to challenges, and develop critical thinking and decision-making skills. However, organizational challenges such as limited resources or ineffective structures may persist on campus, ultimately affecting student engagement potential (Lestari et al., 2024).

As a vital element in higher education, student organizations not only serve as platforms for academic skill development but also support students' soft skill enhancement. Therefore, a strategic approach is needed to ensure that organizational activities contribute to academic success while fostering an inclusive and empowering environment. This study aims to explore the meaning of student involvement in organizations amidst academic demands and provide recommendations for maximizing students' potential in facing both academic and non-academic challenges in higher education.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Phenomenology is defined as an approach used to explain the meaning of individuals' lived experiences regarding a concept, encompassing their own perspectives (Kuswarno, 2006). The first stage of this research involves verbatim transcription, followed by data reduction, and finally, data presentation.

The primary instrument in this study is semi-structured interviews. These interviews are designed to provide flexibility in topic exploration, allowing researchers to delve deeper into the subjects' experiences and perspectives. The interview questions cover topics such as the

subjects' experiences in organizations, perceived benefits of organizational involvement, challenges faced during participation, and the impact of organizations on academic and personal life.

The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a process researchers use to identify, analyze, and report data patterns in the form of conclusions and interpretations (Najmah et al., 2023). The objective of this study is to understand the meaning of student involvement in organizations amid academic responsibilities. The phenomenological approach is chosen to explore subjective experiences and individual perceptions related to their participation in organizations.

3. Result

The research conducted on three subjects revealed five key findings: the meaning of organizational involvement, organizations as a platform for self-development, togetherness and social support, a means of practicing awareness and balance, and challenges and learning experiences. The following sections elaborate on these findings.

The Meaning of Organizational Involvement

Organizational involvement holds profound significance for the interviewed subjects, as reflected in various aspects of their self-development and academic life. The subjects in the study perceive organizations as "a platform for self-development," where they can acquire practical skills and soft skills not taught in classrooms, such as critical thinking and public speaking. One subject stated:

"For me, I see organizations as a self-development platform. Through organizations, I have learned many things that I don't get in lectures or classes."

Additionally, the subjects emphasize the importance of balancing academic and non-academic activities, acknowledging that organizational involvement helps them manage time and prepare for the workforce. Time management becomes a crucial skill they develop, requiring them to effectively allocate time between academic duties and organizational activities, despite facing challenges such as scheduling conflicts and financial constraints. While obstacles exist, their organizational experiences enhance their capabilities and shape their character, making them more prepared for professional challenges. Overall, involvement in organizations not only provides valuable experiences but also contributes to the development of essential skills and character traits.

Self-Development

Self-development is defined as an individual's process of improving skills, knowledge, and potential. This includes various aspects such as interpersonal skills, leadership, time management, and problem-solving, all aimed at achieving personal goals. As stated by one of the subjects in the study:

"In organizations, I learned to think critically. I was also taught how to analyze situations and determine the best solutions. Also, I became more confident in speaking up and expressing my opinions during class discussions."

In this context, organizational involvement is viewed as a means of developing both personal and interpersonal skills, with a tendency to have a more positive than negative impact on individuals.

Togetherness and Social Support

Togetherness and social support refer to positive relationships and interactions within a group or community, where members provide emotional support, assistance, and a sense of connection. One subject shared:

"Some people may not feel a strong sense of belonging in organizations, but for me, it's very real. I feel like I have a new home. I enjoy being surrounded by people who share the same goals as me. We work towards our objectives together, without competition, but rather by supporting each other."

This statement highlights how organizational involvement fosters a sense of togetherness and social support, reinforcing a positive and collaborative atmosphere.

A Means of Practicing Awareness and Balance

Awareness refers to an individual's understanding of themselves, their surroundings, and situations, while balance denotes the ability to manage various aspects of life effectively. One subject stated:

"I learned to manage my time by setting priorities for both academics and organizational activities. I ensure that neither is neglected, so everything runs in harmony."

This illustrates how individuals develop time management skills, ensuring that academic responsibilities and organizational activities complement each other rather than conflict.

Challenges and Learning Experiences

Challenges refer to situations that require adaptation and problem-solving, while learning experiences involve gaining knowledge, skills, or attitudes through experiences. A subject expressed:

"Balancing my academic workload and organization tasks was tough, especially when deadlines clashed. But I managed to get through it by prioritizing and strategizing my tasks."

This demonstrates that overcoming challenges in organizations enhances individuals' social and professional experiences, helping them develop problem-solving skills that contribute to personal growth..

4. Discussion

The research findings indicate that involvement in organizations has a significant impact on students' personal development. The meaning that subjects derive from their organizational experiences reflects a broader understanding of education, where learning occurs not only in the classroom but also through social interactions and practical experiences. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in the learning process (Masgumelar & Mustafa, 2021).

Subjects involved in organizations identified that they gained essential skills required in the workplace, such as communication, leadership, and time management skills. These skills are often primary requirements for prospective employees across various industries (Junaedi et al., 2023). Thus, organizations function as a bridge connecting classroom theories with real-world practices, providing students with a competitive edge when entering the job market.

The importance of balancing academic and non-academic activities, as highlighted by

the subjects, also suggests that higher education should consider the holistic aspects of student development. Educational institutions should support student involvement in organizations by providing necessary resources and training to help them manage their time and responsibilities more effectively (Santoso, 2023).

Overall, participation in organizations not only provides valuable experiences but also contributes to developing essential skills and character. This study affirms that student organizations can be an effective tool in preparing students for future challenges. Therefore, further encouragement is needed to increase student participation in organizational activities on campus.

The findings offer new insights into the meaning of student involvement in organizations amid academic responsibilities. These results can be linked to various relevant theories and highlight both differences and similarities with previous studies.

First, regarding personal development, this study is consistent with Chickering et al.'s (1969) theory, which explains that out-of-class experiences, such as organizational involvement, contribute to the development of interpersonal skills, leadership, and time management. Subjects in this study expressed that through organizations, they could think critically, solve problems, and increase self-confidence. This is also supported by Renato et al. (2024), who stated that student organizations help shape professional attitudes. However, this study expands the understanding by illustrating how organizational involvement provides direct learning experiences related to real-life challenges students face.

Second, the sense of togetherness and social support found in this study supports the social support theory by Cohen & Wills (1985), which states that emotional support from groups can help individuals cope with stress. Subjects felt that organizations provided a space for familial bonds and togetherness, creating an emotionally supportive environment. These findings align with Alawiyah et al. (2022), who found that strong social relationships help students deal with academic pressure. However, this study adds a new perspective by highlighting how this sense of togetherness can be a catalyst for individuals to grow together in achieving common goals.

Third, awareness and balance found in this study relate to the concept of work-life balance extended into the academic context (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Students involved in organizations demonstrated the ability to manage priorities between academic tasks and organizational responsibilities without compromising either aspect. This aligns with Najmah et al. (2023), who found that effective time management is a crucial skill in supporting academic and non-academic balance. This study provides new insights by showing that this balance is not just a result of time management but also stems from a deep understanding of individual values and goals.

Lastly, the challenges and learning experiences found in this study reflect the importance of overcoming obstacles. Consistent with Yorensa & Idulfilastri (2023), challenges faced by students in organizations enrich their self-awareness and understanding of their environment. Subjects acknowledged the pressures and difficulties, but they viewed these experiences as valuable learning opportunities. In this context, this study uniquely contributes by depicting how students can turn challenges into opportunities for personal and professional development.

Student involvement in organizations has become an increasingly important topic in

higher education. Research shows that participation in student organizations contributes not only to academic skill development but also enriches soft skills crucial for the workplace. In this context, it is essential to explore how such involvement affects time management, skill development, and students' psychological well-being.

One of the main findings of this study is that students active in organizations tend to have better time management skills. They learn to prioritize between academic responsibilities and organizational activities, a crucial skill they carry into the workforce. Research by Renato et al. (2024) indicates that students involved in organizations demonstrate improved planning and time management skills, contributing to their academic success. This aligns with statements from subjects in this study, who emphasized the importance of prioritization and using to-do lists to manage their time effectively.

Furthermore, involvement in organizations provides opportunities for students to develop better communication skills. Within organizations, students often face situations requiring public speaking, idea presentation, and collaboration. Research by Rahmawati & Susantiningrum (2024) indicates that communication skills acquired through organizational experiences are highly valuable and often not formally taught in academic curricula. This aligns with statements from study subjects, who reported increased confidence in public speaking and the ability to express their opinions clearly.

Additionally, organizational involvement contributes to leadership skill development. Students who take on active roles in organizations often encounter challenges requiring the ability to lead teams, manage conflicts, and make sound decisions. According to Junaedi et al. (2023), leadership experiences gained through student organizations enhance their preparedness for the workforce. These leadership skills are crucial, as many employers seek candidates who possess not only academic knowledge but also leadership and teamwork abilities.

From a psychological perspective, involvement in organizations also provides significant benefits. Students active in organizations often report lower stress levels and better psychological well-being. This may be due to the social support they receive from their peers. Research by Alawiyah et al. (2022) shows that social support acts as a buffer against academic stress, helping students overcome challenges. In this context, student organizations serve as supportive communities where students can share experiences and assist each other in coping with academic pressures.

In the context of globalization and technological advancements, organizational involvement also broadens students' perspectives on the world. Through organizations, students can engage in socially impactful projects, participate in international activities, and learn about global issues. This not only enriches their experiences but also helps them develop a broader worldview. Research by Smith et al. (2022) indicates that students engaged in international organizations tend to have a better understanding of cultural diversity and global challenges—key skills in an increasingly interconnected workforce.

However, it is important to acknowledge that organizational involvement also presents challenges. Students often feel pressured to fulfill commitments from various responsibilities, both academic and organizational. Research by Simatupang (2024) shows that students engaged in multiple extracurricular activities may experience exhaustion and declining academic performance if they fail to manage their time effectively. Therefore, it is crucial for

students to learn how to balance their organizational involvement and academic responsibilities.

Educational institutions also play a vital role in supporting student engagement in organizations. By providing necessary resources and support, institutions can help students develop skills essential for career success. Leadership and time management training programs can be integrated into curricula to better prepare students for future challenges. Institutions can also encourage collaboration between student organizations and faculties to create a more holistic learning experience.

5. Conclusion

Student involvement in organizations amid academic responsibilities has a significant impact on personal development, including interpersonal skills, leadership, and time management abilities. Through organizational experiences, students learn critical thinking, problem-solving, and public speaking skills. Additionally, organizations serve as a space for building camaraderie and social support, helping students cope with academic pressures and fostering an inclusive environment. Despite challenges such as scheduling conflicts and academic pressures, students involved in organizations demonstrate the ability to overcome these obstacles productively.

The experiences gained from organizations not only strengthen character but also provide practical skills relevant to the workforce. This involvement helps students understand the importance of balancing academic responsibilities and organizational activities harmoniously. Student organizations also contribute to building students' mental resilience, teaching prioritization skills, and preparing them to become more competent professionals.

Future research should explore the experiences of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and types of organizations to understand the varying impacts of organizational involvement on personal development. Longitudinal studies are also needed to examine the long-term effects of student involvement in organizations on career progression. Furthermore, future studies could investigate specific factors influencing students' success in balancing academic and organizational responsibilities, such as family or peer support, to provide more comprehensive insights.

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