

# How college clubs affect freshmen's development?

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**Abstract.** This study investigates the influence of college clubs on the personal development of freshmen at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen. Utilizing a survey methodology, the research examines freshmen's preferences for different types of clubs and the subsequent impacts on their academic performance, social skills, and career aspirations. Findings indicate that participation in college clubs enhances social competencies, provides a platform for leadership and teamwork skills development, and enriches students' extracurricular lives, potentially influencing their career perspectives. The study highlights the significant role college clubs play in fostering an environment that supports the holistic development of freshmen, encouraging active engagement and personal growth within the university setting.

**Key words:** College Clubs, Freshmen Development, Student Engagement, Academic Performance, Social Skills.

## 1. Introduction

Most of the students who want to make a quick transition from high school to college often not only because they yearning for the freedom of college life, but for the variety of universities' clubs. Universities' original intention of establishing the clubs is to enrich undergraduates' college life, broaden their perspective of looking at a thing, and also exercise multiple abilities. Participating in these clubs enables us to make more friends, explore more potentials and expand more hobbies. At the same time, these clubs involving different fields also have an integral impact on our lives, learning and growth, which is even possible to change the way we think about our major. This research essay will focus on Chinese university students and how college clubs affect their personal after their attending of college, the focus group will be the freshmen in grade one at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHKSZ).

## 2. Topic design

### 2.1. Literature review

A review of relevant general study on the effect of university club shows that the abilities and exercises which students gain from participating in clubs will directly affect their growth process, life and future. (Ömür Hakan Kuzu, 2021) College clubs have developed rapidly as an innovative organization, their numbers and types are increasing day by day. As one of the important supplementary forms of classroom teaching in colleges and universities, clubs play an important role in promoting the development of college students' quality education, improving college students' innovative ability and employability. (Shao Xue, 2019) The role of college student clubs is not only to share interests and hobbies. As the second classroom of students' quality education, its service function and educational radiation function are becoming more and more prominent. (Bu Shu, 2016) According to several studies, college clubs have become an effective carrier for undergraduates to improve their personal qualities and expand their abilities. They play a unique and important role in constantly improving students' knowledge structure, strengthening practical skills, improving their comprehensive abilities, and even sublimating their ideological and moral levels.

### 2.2. Background of college clubs

When students are in high school, there is always a plethora of bylaws and rules that limit students to whether they can do something or how to do something. High school students are often identified

as lacking self-discipline, logic, or organizational skills. To distinguish from the education system in high school, a new type of group organization has gradually formed in the continuous development of colleges, which is called college club or college student association. The college student associations are college students in order to achieve individual prosperity the needs of fun and hobbies, meet the common wishes of the members, voluntarily form a group established mass student groups. (Bu Shu, 2016) Organization members can hold meetings and carry out a series of activities to achieve the effect of exchanging opinions and exercising thinking. The high degree of freedom and flexibility of the college clubs, as well as the wide-ranging characteristics attract freshmen's attention. That is, daily life and abilities of first-year college students are also affected by their participation in the clubs.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Questionnaire**

I designed some question to collect what kind of clubs do freshmen prefer, and which form of activities they would like to participate in. On the basis of these questions, I made some other deeper questions, 'In what areas have you improved your abilities after joining the club? Whether these activities will affect academic results?' and 'Does the club you join have an impact on the career you want to pursue in the future? Or does it affect the establishment of your goals?'. The target audience is undergraduate students in grade one from all schools in CUHKSZ. The research model chosen for the survey is the online site <https://www.hotjar.com/surveys/>, which is easy for researching and accessing, and also protect the privacy of the respondents.

#### **3.2. Participant demographics**

The reason for the original formation of Chinese university clubs is actually that several like-minded students gathered together to form a small group privately, aiming to exchange academic knowledge and opinions. Then, under the encouragement of the state, the categories were gradually refined, so that the clubs were not only limited to academic knowledge, but also more related to student quality, etc. (Zhu& Tang, 2017) CUHKSZ is a university dedicated to cultivating students with international perspectives, diverse talents and rich knowledge reserves, which is keen to hold various activities to exercise students' communication skills and decision-making skills, and has hundreds of clubs and college student associations. It not only provides venues for various clubs to hold activities, but also calls on everyone to participate in them. The construction of CUHKSZ club culture not only strengthens the ability of the college to manage and educate people, but also improves the educational environment in the school and the humanistic quality of college students in many aspects. Multiple studies have shown that freshmen change a lot after joining a club. Due to the wide distribution of club members, people can generate sparks of thinking collision in the process of interacting with others, they can understand their own and others' different solutions to the same thing, and they can also get the ability to coordinate. (Li& Liu, 2021) For these reasons, it is believed that joining clubs has some impact on self-development and future.

### **4. Result analysis**

#### **4.1. Participants' responses**

Focus on the results, a total of 31 students participated in this online survey. The respondents are mainly from the HSS school, including 11 males and 18 females, and a small number of students from SDS school, which has 2 males and 2 females. The imbalance of gender quantity can be predicted according to the current number of women in HSS school is almost twice the number of men. Due to the use of random sampling methods, the number of survey targets in grade distribution is also very different. Among them, the proportion of the first-year undergraduates account for 87% of all responses. (27:37%male-63%female), and the remaining 13% are the second-year

students(4:50% male-50%female). Frankly speaking, all of the respondents provide the correct and worth thinking answers to the questionnaire. Question 3 to 5 are related to the personal situations of respondents', according to the statistics, respondents often choose the clubs based on different willingness. The category of the club which respondents joined in can be roughly divided into four types, entertainment (55%), sports (23%), ability improvement (16%) and planning management (6%). For students who prefer the first two types reported that the clubs are more like a place for leisure and relax, and those who choose the latter two clubs are to improve their different levels of their owns. Based on this, more respondents expressed reluctance to take up roles in clubs, answered that overall management and coordination are very difficult to carry out in the clubs. In addition to the above problem, respondents have more different views on the impact of clubs on aspects such as our lives and abilities. (Question 6-11) Simultaneously, question 12 also received some relevant suggestions for this questionnaire.

#### **4.2. Club influence and freshmen development**

To further explore the impact of clubs on first-year students, we will focus on the responses to questions 6 to 11. We briefly divide the impact of participating in clubs into three situations, on individuals, on life, on learning and on careers in the future. When we first focused on question 7, nearly 84% of students feel they have changed a lot on individuals since joining the university clubs or student union, with the majority agreeing that their social skills or cognition have improved. The results showed that college clubs provide a platform for students to freely make friends, express opinions, and come up with ideas, respondents pointed out that when they coordinate and communicate with others, they can feel the collision of knowledge and the exchange of ideas, which is not only helpful for training their critical thinking, while also helping them understand the characteristics of different people. In addition, in question 8 about what students learned from clubs' activities, there are 23% of respondents indicated that participating in club activities also helped improve teamwork and leader skills. During the planning of certain large-scale events, students play different roles in those meetings or preparations, they can fully understand their own advantages, and also will help some later teamwork assignments. It is also worth noting that clubs also play an important role in enriching people's daily life. More than half of the replies indicated that since most of the clubs in our school are culture and art, public service and sports, etc., students have the opportunity to participate in some activities related to hobbies and quality improvement after class time. These made the respondents' extra-curricular life more meaningful and their schedules are also more compact. At the same time, in the processes, they can continue to meet new friends and find new goals, and also learn more knowledge by listening to the lectures or participating activities. There are even some people who said that joining different clubs and participating in different activities makes them love life more and spend every day full of energy and hope. In the seventh question, there are also less than half of the respondents said that with the progress of university life, the number of activities organized by many clubs has become less and less, which will also make the impact of clubs on individuals less. This can be seen that most of college students are more prefer to have rich club life. However, too many club activities are not completely conducive to the development of students all the time. This bring us back to the sixth question, in the results of the question about whether learning is affected, it shows that 45% of students feel their learning has been affected to some extent, among them, several students hold indispensable positions in the clubs, which means they also have some workloads except study time. This comes to the result that, with the increase in the amount of schoolwork, some clubs even require to participate in some activities in the exam weeks, which greatly reduced their study time and made their academic result did not meet expectations. In the last question about the impacts of clubs on students, another point is that most of people said that participating in these clubs did not affect their professional or occupational perceptions. Since most clubs are not directly related to career or academics, the purpose of people's participation in clubs is not focus on theses, but due to the improvement of self-ability at different levels, these experiences still provide more possibilities for their development. In general, respondents to this survey greatly

enriched the findings, from the responses to the questions, the target audiences also had a lot of thinking about this questionnaire. They told us about the hidden impacts of participating in the clubs on them from different dimensions of life, different aspects of learning, and different perspectives of ability. No matter what form of club it is, it helps us to take a role that cannot be ignored on the road to self-improvement.

## 5. Conclusion

This article is primarily based on the findings of the survey of the research question, 'How college clubs affect freshmen's development?'. Universities are important platforms to connect people from school to society, which means that the experiences students had in colleges will have some inner impacts for their decisions in the future. Therefore, the importance of this question is to explore the impact of joining different clubs on the learning, life or personal ability of different people from their perspectives, and to help them understand the pros and cons of choosing those clubs. According to the survey results, respondents answered all survey questions carefully and clearly, and each response has a unique point of view, which also helps to make a strong statement of different situations. The mainly target respondents are the freshmen of 2021 at CUHKSZ, at the same time, there are some data for grade two students in college. Overall, the survey was successful and relatively complete, which not only shows the students' multi-faceted views and opinions on the issues, but also reflects their concern about those situations. From the perspective of participating in different clubs, the students pointed out the improvement of various abilities obtained by participating in club activities, as well as the impacts or thoughts on study, life and future development. Simultaneously, in the final suggestions on the development of university clubs and the questionnaire, some students pointed out that people can set up more clubs related to career development, strengthen management and distribution, arrange time reasonably. All in all, this survey shows us how the perspectives of students with different education background have shifted after joining the club, and the respondents use their own experiences to introduce us to the duties and functions of different clubs and give us a better understanding of this. Finally, statistics show that no matter what club students join, their abilities in different aspects have been improved accordingly, and have different levels of impact on future development. Therefore, I highly recommended that everyone should pay attention to the importance of taking college clubs, and school officials should also pay attention to the constructions of clubs, actively promote and develop cultural club activities that are conducive to students' self-development, encourage students to enrich themselves in their spare time and develop more possibilities. At the same time, students should choose clubs correctly according to their own conditions to maximize their role, and continue to learn, accumulate experience, and improve themselves in the process of participating in activities and communicating with others.

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