



Journal of Education and Learning Research

Journal homepage: <https://jelr.greadc.org/index.php/jelr>



Exploring Teachers' Experience in the Implementation of Giving Merit Points to Students Participating in Extracurricular Activities

Agnes Pacas*, Mario F. Alayon, Wilson Al D. Ramin, Krizzia Lou C. Alviso, Julie Kaye B. Bercaiso

Graduate School, Saint Columban College, Pagadian City, 7016, Philippines

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 22 April 2026

Accepted: 15 July 2026

Published online: 10 Aug 2026

Keywords:

Teachers' Experiences;
Implementation;
Merit Points;
Students' Participation;
Extracurricular Activities

* Corresponding author.

E-mail: *agnes.pacas@scc.edu.ph
mario.alayon@scc.edu.ph
wilsonal.ramin@scc.edu.ph
krizzialou.alviso@scc.edu.ph
juliekaye.bercaiso@scc.edu.ph

Article Doi

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.62208/jelr.4.1.p.9-21>

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined how senior high school teachers implement merit-point systems for students' participation in extracurricular activities, focusing on the bases for awarding points, students' observed responses, and strategies for ensuring consistency, fairness, and transparency. Although extracurricular participation is widely recognized as part of holistic student development, limited research has examined how merit-point systems are actually implemented at the senior high school level, particularly in terms of standardization, fairness, and evidence-based awarding practices. Seven (7) senior high school teachers whose students participated in extracurricular activities served as participants. Data were gathered through open-ended interviews that explored teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices in awarding merit points. Findings revealed that students commonly participated in sports and athletics, performing arts, student government, and school clubs or organizations. Teachers awarded merit points based on active participation, competition level, demonstrated achievement, and sustained commitment. To ensure fairness, they relied on clear criteria, verified participation, and equitable treatment. Teachers also observed enhanced motivation, perceived recognition, and strengthened academic confidence among students after receiving merit points. Based on these findings, the study proposes a standard operating procedure to promote consistent, transparent, and effective merit-point implementation.

1. Introduction

Extracurricular activities are school-based programs conducted outside regular classroom instruction that support students' physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development alongside their academic learning (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Bhusal, 2024).

In the present educational system, academic instruction alone is insufficient to ensure holistic student development. Students' participation in extracurricular activities such as sports and athletics, performing arts, student government, and academic clubs enhances leadership skills, teamwork, social relationships, character formation, and socio-civic

involvement, while also improving academic performance and lifelong development (Kakungulu, 2024). Similarly, Zarrett et al. (2021) concluded that extracurricular involvement contributes positively to students' academic achievement, character development, and civic engagement.

Because of the recognized value of extracurricular involvement, many educational institutions have developed systems that formally recognize students' participation and achievements beyond academics (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Many European educational systems increasingly recognize learning outcomes acquired through non-formal learning experiences, including extracurricular activities, as part of broader qualification and lifelong learning pathways (European Commission, 2022). In the Philippines, the Department of Education formally recognizes co-curricular participation by awarding points for leadership, organizational involvement, competitions, and other approved extracurricular activities in the selection of honor students (Department of Education, 2006). Consequently, schools implement these national guidelines through their own institutional policies for recognizing students' extracurricular participation and achievements.

Despite the increasing implementation of merit-point systems, the absence of a standardized framework has led to variations in how points are monitored, evaluated, and awarded across teachers, departments, and schools. These inconsistencies raise concerns regarding fairness, transparency, and consistency in the implementation of merit-point systems. Although studies have extensively documented the benefits of extracurricular involvement, there remains limited research examining how merit-point systems are implemented at the senior high school level, particularly from the perspective of teachers who directly administer them. This creates a critical gap in understanding how schools operationalize merit-point systems and how these practices influence student motivation, participation, and engagement.

Teachers play a central role in implementing merit-point systems because they directly monitor student participation, document performance, and apply evaluation criteria. However, teachers also encounter challenges related to objectivity, consistency, and additional administrative responsibilities in evaluating non-academic contributions (Kulal et al., 2022), which can lead to discrepancies in how students are assessed and may affect overall fairness in the merit-point system. Despite these challenges, effective implementation of merit-point systems has been

associated with stronger student engagement and improved school participation (Bernabe et al., 2025). Given these concerns, exploring teachers' experiences in implementing merit-point systems is essential to better understand how schools may establish fairer, more transparent, and more consistent practices in recognizing students' extracurricular participation.

This research was anchored in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), which suggests that people feel more motivated when they can make their own choices. The theory further suggests that three innate and universal needs that influence motivation are the following: Autonomy, which refers to an individual's sense of initiative and ownership in performing activities in which actions are experienced in line with personal interests and values rather than influenced by external factors, such as rewards or punishments. The second is competence, which is the individual's feeling of mastery and perception of effectiveness in completing tasks, desire to succeed, or achieve desired outcomes that are best met in well-structured environments that offer optimal challenges, positive feedback, and growth opportunities; and the third is Relatedness, which is the sense of belonging and connection, mutual respect, and care within the social environment fostering meaningful engagement, sustained participation, and overall well-being. The Self-Determination theory served as an interpretive lens to understand how teachers perceive the motivational effects of merit points and how the recognition system influences student engagement, confidence, and holistic development by exploring teachers' firsthand experiences and perspectives (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

This study explored teachers' experiences implementing merit points for students participating in various extracurricular activities during the 2024-2025 academic year and specifically investigated the following issues:

1. What are the different extracurricular activities that students participate in?
2. What is the basis for the teachers in giving merit points to students participating in extracurricular activities?
3. What are the students' responses after being given merit points for participating in extracurricular activities, as observed by the teachers?
4. How do teachers ensure consistency and fairness in giving merit points to students participating in extracurricular activities?
5. Based on the findings, what proposed standard operating procedure can be formulated for

giving merit points to students participating in extracurricular activities?

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore teachers' experiences in implementing a merit-point system for students participating in extracurricular activities. The study focused on senior high school teachers directly involved in monitoring, evaluating, and awarding merit points to student participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, allowing participants to describe their experiences, practices, and challenges in implementing the system. Relevant school documents, such as student manuals, attendance records, and extracurricular activity records, were also reviewed to support and validate the interview data. The collected data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and insights related to the implementation of merit points in the school setting (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Research Instrument

The researcher served as the primary instrument, using a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to gather data on teachers' experiences in implementing the merit-point system. The instrument was designed to elicit rich, descriptive responses aligned with the study's research questions, focusing on implementation, challenges, consistency, and the role of merit points. Its flexible format allowed consistent inquiry while accommodating emerging insights during interviews. The guide was validated by experts in qualitative research and merit systems and revised based on their feedback. Field notes were also collected during and after interviews to capture nonverbal cues and contextual details, strengthening data accuracy. Additionally, documentary analysis of school records and policies was conducted to triangulate findings and provide a more profound context for the implementation of the merit-point system.

Research Participants

Seven (7) Senior High School teachers from a selected private institution in Misamis Occidental participated in the study and were coded from TP 1 to TP 7 to ensure anonymity. The participants were purposively selected based on criteria such as being full-time teachers with at least one year of teaching experience in the institution. They also handled different subject

areas and were directly involved in monitoring, advising, and evaluating students engaged in extracurricular activities. Additionally, many held key roles such as club advisers, student organization coordinators, and sports or performing arts facilitators, making them reliable informants. Their varied teaching backgrounds and extracurricular responsibilities provided diverse perspectives on the merit-point system. Each participant had between two and eight years of teaching experience in subjects including Philosophy, Science, Mathematics, Business, English, Physical Education, and Filipino. Their combined roles and experiences contributed to a comprehensive understanding of how merit points are implemented in the school context.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at a selected private senior high school institution in Misamis Occidental that provides merit points to students who participate in extracurricular activities. The study focused on a single school context in which merit points are implemented, and the analysis was conducted using the school's policies and policy framework. The study examined the phenomenon within its real-life educational context, where teachers naturally implement the merit-point system as part of everyday school practices.

Within that institution, teachers are directly involved in supervising extracurricular activities and in implementing school-based guidelines for awarding merit points. The school offers a range of extracurricular activities, including athletics, cultural organizations, school-sponsored structured extracurricular activities, student government organizations, and the arts. By examining a single school as a bounded case, the study provided a detailed and contextually grounded understanding of how teachers implement and use merit points in practice.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study followed systematic steps to ensure efficient data collection. First, the researcher obtained a permission letter from Saint Columban College Graduate Studies, signed by the Dean of the Graduate School. Next, the researcher presented this letter to the Vice President for Administration of the selected private senior high school institution for approval. Following this step, the researcher submitted a permission letter to the senior high school principal, formally requesting that the identified participants be allowed to participate in the study.

After securing approvals, an orientation session was conducted for participants to clarify expectations, explain the purpose of the study and the nature of their participation, address ethical considerations, and discuss the study's confidentiality before the interviews. The researcher obtained informed consent from participants before data collection. Subsequently, appointments will be scheduled to accommodate participants' interview availability.

Aside from the semi-structured interviews, the observed contextual data related to the implementation of the merit-point system included teacher-student interactions during extracurricular activities, awarding or documentation procedures for merit points, verification practices, and directly observable students' responses, which were systematically recorded in field notes. During this observation, the researcher maintained a non-intrusive role to avoid influencing natural behaviors within the setting. As the researcher conducted the observations, approved schedules and ethical standards were adhered to ensure confidentiality and respect for all participants of this study.

Furthermore, the researcher performed document and artifact analysis to supplement and triangulate the interview and observation data. The documents and artifacts reviewed included school policies and guidelines on extracurricular activities, merit-point matrices or rubrics, student handbooks, records of extracurricular participation, and other relevant institutional documents related to student recognition. These materials provided contextual evidence of how merit-point systems were documented and implemented within the institution.

Data Analysis

In this study, thematic analysis was employed following the steps of qualitative data analysis outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), namely data collection, data preparation, data coding, and data analysis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document and artifact analysis, including school policies, guidelines on extracurricular activities, and other relevant documents, allowing the researcher to draw on multiple sources.

During data preparation, the researcher transcribed interview recordings accurately and compiled relevant documents to ensure the data were accurate and complete. The researcher conducted initial coding, during which significant words, phrases, and segments of data that obtained participants' experiences,

perceptions, and practices related to the implementation of the merit-point system were classified and labeled. Then, the researcher focused on coding, grouping related codes into broader categories through constant comparison across data sources, and identified recurring patterns and relationships in the data. Furthermore, the researcher examined themes across interviews and documents to ensure consistency and to deepen understanding.

Finally, the researcher interpreted the themes in relation to the study's research questions and the existing literature, and maintained an audit trail of analytic decisions, including the coding framework and thematic development, to support transparency and dependability. This process emphasized understanding how and why teachers experience and implement the merit-point system within their real-life educational setting, rather than seeking generalizations beyond the case.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards to protect and maintain the integrity of all participants throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained by providing participants with clear information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no coercion or negative consequences for non-participation or withdrawal. Confidentiality was strictly maintained through the use of codes instead of names and by removing identifying details from all records and reports. All data were used solely for academic purposes, ensuring participants' privacy and protection. Proper in-text citation practices were followed to uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Furthermore, findings were reported transparently and accurately, ensuring that interpretations genuinely reflected participants' responses without fabrication or misrepresentation.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results and discussion of a qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in implementing merit points for senior high school students engaged in extracurricular activities. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, then transcribed, organized, and categorized into meaningful themes. The analysis focused on identifying patterns, shared meanings, and insights from teachers' narratives to better understand how the merit-point system operates in an actual

school setting. Similar responses were grouped into thematic categories, which served as the primary units of analysis. The researcher interpreted these themes, integrated supporting documents, and reconstructed meanings to provide a comprehensive description of the system's implementation. Selected participant quotations, labeled as TP (Teacher Participant), were used to support and validate the findings.

The categories from the statement of the problem served as the basis for the discussion of results and findings. All categories were discussed in detail in the succeeding sections, drawing on participants' narratives and relevant literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' implementation of the merit-point system.

Extracurricular Activities Available in School

This category describes the extracurricular activities available in the school, as reported by teacher participants, defined as organized engagements beyond classroom instruction that support students' holistic development, including skills, leadership, responsibility, and social connection. Data from seven Senior High School teachers revealed four major subcategories of extracurricular activities: sports and athletics, performing arts, student government, and clubs/organizations. These categories represent the dominant forms of student involvement and provide the framework for recognizing participation within the merit-point system.

Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), academic clubs provide conditions that support students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The availability of diverse clubs enables students to choose activities aligned with their interests, thereby fostering autonomy. Participation in structured tasks, leadership roles, and skill-based activities enhances competence through opportunities for mastery and meaningful contribution. At the same time, collaborative engagement within clubs strengthens relatedness by promoting social interaction and shared experiences among peers. Collectively, the findings indicated that academic clubs function not only as avenues for extracurricular participation but also as supportive environments that nurture intrinsic motivation and meaningful student engagement.

Sports and Athletics

Sports and athletics emerged as one of the most prominent and widely participated extracurricular activities in the school. These structured, school-

sponsored activities included both individual and team-based events such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, chess, sepak takraw, and track and field, conducted during intramurals, district meets, and higher-level competitions. Teacher participants highlighted the strong student engagement in sports, noting that these activities attract students with diverse interests and abilities. Observations revealed that sports activities were systematically organized through supervised training and competitions led by teacher-coaches, requiring students to balance academic responsibilities with athletic commitments. School documents further confirmed that sports and athletics are formally recognized extracurricular activities. The findings suggest that sports and athletics extend beyond recreational participation and serve as significant avenues for developing discipline, teamwork, leadership, and social belonging. The high level of student involvement may be influenced by the visibility, recognition, and collective identity associated with school sports, particularly during major competitions and events. The structured nature of participation and opportunities for higher-level competitions appeared to sustain students' motivation and commitment despite academic and physical demands. These findings imply that sports and athletics contribute substantially to holistic student development by fostering personal and interpersonal competencies beyond classroom instruction, supporting previous studies that identified organized sports as important contributors to student engagement and development (Zarrett et al., 2021; Krisna, 2025).

Performing Arts

Performing arts emerged as a significant category of extracurricular activities, encompassing organized school-based engagements such as dance, music, drama, and other performance-oriented disciplines conducted during school events, competitions, and cultural programs. Teacher participants reported high student involvement, particularly during intramurals and special school activities, where students actively participated to showcase their talents and gain recognition for their strands or departments. These activities were systematically organized through regular rehearsals supervised by teacher-advisers, while institutional documents and multimedia records confirmed that performing arts are formally recognized components of the school's extracurricular program. The findings suggest that performing arts function not only as venues for creative expression but also as important mechanisms for student identity formation, social recognition, and active school engagement. Students' strong participation may be influenced by the visibility and recognition associated

with public performances, which provide opportunities for self-expression, peer affiliation, and institutional acknowledgment. The structured preparation and collaborative nature of performing arts activities also appear to strengthen students' discipline, confidence, and interpersonal skills beyond classroom instruction. These findings imply that performing arts contribute significantly to holistic student development by fostering creativity, feelings of empowerment, and social connectedness among participants, supporting previous studies that identified performing arts as accessible and meaningful forms of extracurricular participation in schools (Prazna & Isy, [2024](#)).

Student Government

Student government emerged as a significant component of the school's extracurricular activities, functioning as a student-led organization that provides opportunities for leadership, representation, and active involvement in school governance beyond classroom instruction. Teacher participants identified student government as a formal extracurricular structure in which elected student leaders assume responsibilities in planning, organizing, and coordinating school programs and activities. Students involved in the organization were consistently described as highly visible and actively engaged in school events, demonstrating leadership, accountability, and responsibility in representing the student body. Their participation extended beyond academic requirements and involved collaboration with teachers and administrators in implementing school initiatives and managing institutional activities.

Observations and documentary evidence, including the school's student manual, photographs, and video recordings, confirmed the active involvement of student government members in assemblies, celebrations, and other school-wide programs. The findings suggest that student government functions not only as an organizational body but also as a mechanism for developing leadership competencies, decision-making skills, and institutional responsibility among students. The active participation of student leaders may be influenced by the visibility, authority, and recognition associated with their roles, which encourage accountability and sustained engagement in school affairs. These findings imply that student government contributes significantly to holistic student development by strengthening leadership capacity, organizational skills, and civic responsibility beyond classroom learning, supporting previous studies that identified student councils as structured

avenues for leadership and co-curricular engagement (Alviento, [2018](#); Tabigo-on, [2025](#)).

Academic Clubs

Academic clubs emerged as a distinct and well-established subcategory of extracurricular activities, providing structured opportunities for students to engage in interest-based, collaborative, and skill-oriented pursuits beyond classroom instruction. Teacher participants identified several school-recognized organizations, including the Drum and Lyre Corps, Glee Club, Drama Kanta at Sayaw (DRAKANYAW) Society, Youth for Environment Organization (YES-O), school publication, and Bookworm Club, whose members actively participated in both club-related and school-wide activities. Observational and documentary data confirmed that these organizations regularly conducted meetings, rehearsals, planning sessions, and team-building activities under the supervision of teacher-advisers, demonstrating the institutional support and continuity of club operations within the school. The findings suggest that academic clubs function not only as supplementary school organizations but also as important spaces for student identity formation, collaboration, and practical skill development. The sustained participation observed among club members may be influenced by students' opportunities to pursue shared interests, assume leadership roles, and experience a sense of belonging within smaller peer communities. The structured yet interest-based nature of club activities appears to encourage active engagement and social connectedness, which may explain why students remain consistently involved despite academic demands. These findings imply that academic clubs contribute significantly to holistic education by fostering leadership, collaboration, and personal development while strengthening students' attachment to the school community (Rahateallah & Azmi, [2025](#)). The results support prior studies indicating that participation in school-based clubs enhances academic achievement and promotes students' sense of belonging and engagement in school life (Gieg et al., [2017](#)).

Basis for Giving Merit Points to Students Participating in Extracurricular Activities

This category refers to the specific criteria and considerations teachers apply when assigning merit points to students who participate in extracurricular activities. These principles guided teachers who recognized students' involvement beyond regular classroom instruction, and this action reflected

students' holistic development in school. It is also a teacher's mechanism in identifying students' effort, participation, or contributions in extracurricular activities. Based on this study, there are four bases for awarding merit points, namely: Active Participation Level, Advanced Competition Level, Demonstrated Achievement, and Sustained Commitment. Each basis represents a distinct aspect of how teachers determine merit points for extracurricular participation. Within the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), recognizing sustained commitment strengthens students' autonomy through self-directed participation, competence through acknowledgment of skill development and perseverance, and relatedness through meaningful interactions and institutional recognition. The results suggest that merit-point systems should emphasize effort, improvement, and dedication as forms of constructive feedback rather than mere rewards. Such an approach can foster intrinsic motivation, promote resilience, and support holistic student development, ultimately encouraging sustained and meaningful engagement in extracurricular activities.

Active Participation Level

Active Participation Level emerged as the primary basis for awarding merit points, referring to students' observable involvement in extracurricular activities through attendance, engagement in practices, and actual participation in school events and competitions. Teacher participants emphasized that merit points were not based on mere membership but on sustained and verifiable participation. Teachers relied on attendance monitoring, rehearsal observations, advisers' records, and multimedia documentation to validate students' involvement, while the school manual formally identified participation as the key indicator of extracurricular engagement. The findings suggest that teachers prioritize active participation because it reflects students' genuine commitment, responsibility, and behavioral engagement rather than symbolic involvement.

This emphasis on observable participation may also function as a mechanism for maintaining fairness and accountability in the merit-point system, as recognition is grounded in documented and consistent involvement. By rewarding sustained engagement, the system encourages students to remain actively committed to extracurricular responsibilities despite academic demands. These findings support the view that meaningful participation and regular attendance are critical indicators and valid bases for their equitable recognition through merit points in

participation, such as in extracurricular programs (Zurina et al., 2018; Chen, 2023).

Advanced Competition Level

Advanced Competition Level refers to the extent of competition reached by students in representing the school or department, from intramurals to district, division, regional, and higher-level contests. Teacher participants emphasized that merit points increase as students advance to higher competition levels because these stages demand greater preparation, discipline, training, and responsibility. This was supported by observations of more intensive coaching, structured practice schedules, and closer teacher supervision for students competing beyond the school level. Institutional documents, including the student manual and official records, also identified competition level as a formal basis for merit allocation, with results, publications, and public postings used as supporting evidence. The findings suggest that teachers consider advanced competition level as a legitimate basis for higher merit points because it reflects not only participation but also increased institutional representation and performance pressure. Students who reach higher levels carry greater responsibility in representing the school, which makes their participation more demanding and visible. Thus, assigning higher merit points at advanced competition levels reinforces the value of effort, skill development, and school representation. This implies that merit-point systems recognize extracurricular participation not as a uniform experience but as a differentiated form of engagement, where higher levels of competition require greater commitment and therefore justify greater recognition. This supports prior research indicating that advanced competitions involve more complex cognitive, social, and performance demands that warrant increased recognition (Jiang & Nair, 2025).

Demonstrated Achievement

Demonstrated Achievement refers to students' observable accomplishments in extracurricular activities, including awards, rankings, recognitions, and the quality of performance during competitions and school events. Findings revealed that teachers considered achievement as a key basis for awarding merit points because it provides concrete evidence of students' skills, preparation, effort, and ability to apply learned competencies in actual performance settings. Merit points were therefore not based on participation alone but were influenced by the quality and results of students' performance. Teachers verified achievement through post-event evaluations, feedback, medals,

certificates, rankings, photographs, recorded performances, and official competition results. Findings show that higher merit points are awarded to students who obtain awards, demonstrate excellent performance, or achieve notable recognition in competitions. It is suggested that demonstrated achievement strengthens the validity and fairness of merit-point allocation by grounding recognition in measurable and documented outcomes. This occurs because awards and performance outputs serve as visible indicators of competence, making it easier for teachers to justify differentiated merit points among participants. However, the emphasis on achievement also implies the need to balance outcome-based recognition with other criteria, such as effort and participation, to avoid limiting recognition only to winners. Overall, demonstrated achievement functions as a performance-based criterion that supports credible evaluation and reinforces the value of excellence in extracurricular engagement, consistent with literature emphasizing authentic evidence and documented accomplishments in student assessment (Zurina et al., 2018; Morris, 2019). Likewise, the study reinforces the idea that awards and verified outputs serve as essential indicators of student excellence in extracurricular contexts.

Sustained Commitment

Sustained Commitment refers to students' consistent investment of time, effort, energy, and personal sacrifice in extracurricular activities while balancing academic responsibilities. Findings revealed that teachers considered sustained commitment as an important basis for awarding merit points because it reflects students' perseverance, discipline, and dedication beyond performance outcomes. Teachers did not rely solely on awards or competition results; instead, they also considered continuous attendance, training participation, adviser feedback, and documented involvement as evidence of long-term engagement. The findings suggest that effort-based recognition is important because not all meaningful extracurricular contributions result in awards or rankings. By recognizing sustained commitment, teachers acknowledge students who consistently participate, endure repeated trainings, and responsibly manage both academic and extracurricular demands. This implies that a fair merit-point system should value not only visible achievements but also the less visible effort and sacrifices behind participation. Such recognition promotes resilience, motivation, and continued engagement, supporting previous studies that link sustained effort and endurance with long-term student involvement in extracurricular activities (Putra et al., 2022).

Students' Responses After Being Given Merit Points for Their Participation in Extracurricular Activities

These are the students' responses after receiving merit points from their teachers for participating in extracurricular activities. In this study, this category refers to the observable reactions, attitudes, and behavioral changes of the students after merit points were awarded. According to the responses gathered from the seven (7) teacher participants, three (3) sub-categories emerged to describe this category: enhanced motivation, Perceived Recognition, and Strengthened Academic Confidence. Each sub-category showed a distinct but related aspect of how students respond to the awarding of merit points.

From a theoretical perspective grounded in Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2000), strengthened academic confidence can be understood as an outcome of fulfilling students' basic psychological needs. Merit-point recognition reinforces students' sense of competence by validating their ability to succeed in both academic and extracurricular contexts. It also supports autonomy by enabling students to pursue activities aligned with their interests without fear of academic disadvantage. Furthermore, recognition from teachers and the school community enhances students' sense of relatedness, fostering emotional connection and institutional belonging. Collectively, these processes contribute to increased confidence, sustained engagement, and a more integrated approach to student development (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Enhanced Motivation

Enhanced Motivation refers to the positive changes in students' behavior and attitude after receiving merit points for extracurricular participation, including greater interest in future activities, increased involvement in school programs, and stronger effort in competitions and events. Findings revealed that students responded to merit points with happiness, excitement, and eagerness, which later translated into higher attendance, more active participation, and increased volunteerism in succeeding activities. Teachers also observed that recognized students encouraged their peers to participate, suggesting that merit points influenced not only individual motivation but also the wider participation culture within the school. The findings imply that merit points function as more than simple rewards; they operate as a recognition mechanism that affirms students' efforts and encourages continued engagement. This may explain why students became more active after receiving merit points, as recognition made their

participation feel valued and meaningful. However, the motivational effect appears strongest when merit points are perceived as supportive acknowledgment rather than as controlling incentives. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, merit-point recognition can strengthen students' autonomy through voluntary re-engagement, competence through validation of effort and performance, and relatedness through affirmation from teachers and peers. Thus, enhanced motivation reflects how a structured recognition system can sustain students' psychological engagement and continued participation in extracurricular activities (Wong & Thomson, [2014](#); Howard et al., [2020](#)). In this way, enhanced motivation emerges as a direct outcome of how structured recognition systems positively shape students' psychological engagement in extracurricular participation (Bautista, [2025](#); Viray-Castillejos, [2023](#)).

Perceived Recognition

Perceived Recognition refers to students' sense of being appreciated, valued, and emotionally affirmed after receiving merit points for extracurricular participation. Findings revealed that students experienced joy, pride, satisfaction, and gratitude when their efforts were formally acknowledged, even when they did not win competitions. This suggests that merit points function beyond achievement-based rewards; they also validate effort, participation, and contribution. Teachers observed that recognized students showed increased confidence, greater enthusiasm for succeeding activities, and a greater sense of belonging, particularly after awarding ceremonies or public acknowledgments. The findings imply that recognition is important because students do not only seek competitive success but also meaningful affirmation of their effort. By recognizing both winners and active participants, the merit-point system reduces the possibility that only high achievers feel valued, thereby making extracurricular participation more inclusive. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, these findings demonstrate that perceived recognition strengthens students' psychological experience of being valued within the school environment. When students receive merit points, they experience a heightened sense of autonomy as their efforts are acknowledged, a strengthened sense of competence through validation of their participation, and an increased sense of relatedness through emotional affirmation and social recognition from teachers and the school community, in this way, perceived recognition functions as a key psychological mechanism that reinforces students'

emotional fulfillment and sustained engagement in extracurricular activities (Chen, [2023](#)).

Strengthened Academic Confidence

Strengthened Academic Confidence refers to students' increased assurance in their academic performance and their ability to balance academic and extracurricular responsibilities after receiving merit points. Findings revealed that merit points helped reduce students' anxiety about possible grade-related consequences caused by absences during rehearsals, trainings, and competitions. Teachers observed that students became more confident in class, participated more actively in discussions, managed their time better, and remained engaged in both academic and co-curricular activities. Institutional documents, including the student manual, further supported this practice by recognizing extracurricular participation without compromising academic standards. The findings imply that merit points serve as an academic support mechanism by helping students perceive that their extracurricular efforts are valued within the school's academic system. This may explain why students became more confident: the recognition reduced the tension between academic responsibilities and extracurricular participation. Rather than viewing extracurricular involvement as a threat to academic standing, students began to see it as part of a balanced and holistic learning experience. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, merit points support competence by affirming students' ability to succeed in both academic and non-academic domains, autonomy by allowing them to pursue activities aligned with their interests, and relatedness by strengthening their connection to the school community. Thus, strengthened academic confidence reflects how a well-implemented merit-point system can reduce grade anxiety, promote balanced engagement, and support students' overall school attachment. (Jones M., [2026](#); Lyoba & Mwila, [2022](#); Bautista, 2025).

Teachers' Consistency and Fairness in Giving Merit Points to Students' Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Consistency and fairness in awarding merit points for extracurricular activities, as used in this study, refer to teachers' requirements to establish clear, objective criteria and apply them equitably to all students. It involves pre-defining the points for different levels of participation and involvement, regularly monitoring participation, and avoiding subjective or biased judgments that can lead to student fear or resentment. By implementing a well-planned and consistently

applied system, teachers can use merit points as a powerful tool to motivate students and acknowledge their contributions to the school community. According to teacher participants' experiences, their approach to ensuring consistency and fairness in awarding merit points to students participating in extracurricular activities was as follows: Clear Criteria Implementation, Verified Participation, and Equitable Treatment.

Viewed through Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2000), these practices support students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Clear criteria help students understand expectations and make informed choices about their participation, supporting autonomy. Verified participation reinforces competence because students see that their efforts and achievements are recognized through evidence-based assessment. Equitable treatment strengthens relatedness by promoting trust, respect, and fairness between teachers and students. Thus, a consistent and fair merit-point system does more than regulate awarding practices; it creates a supportive school environment where students feel capable, fairly valued, and motivated to sustain meaningful extracurricular engagement.

Clear Criteria Implementation

Clear Criteria Implementation refers to teachers' use of predetermined standards, such as participation level, performance, achievement, effort, and competition level, in awarding merit points for extracurricular participation. Findings revealed that teachers relied on observable and documented indicators, including attendance, contribution, competition level, and official results, rather than personal judgment. This practice is important because merit-point systems can easily become subjective when criteria are unclear or inconsistently applied. The findings suggest that clear criteria serve as the main safeguard against favoritism, bias, and unequal treatment. By using common benchmarks and coordinating with colleagues, teachers were able to compare students' involvement more fairly and justify merit-point decisions through verifiable evidence. This implies that standardized criteria not only improve consistency but also strengthen the credibility and transparency of the merit-point system. Thus, clear criteria transform merit allocation from an informal reward practice into a more accountable recognition process, supporting previous studies that emphasize structured scoring systems as essential for fairness and accountability in assessment (Ahmed et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with prior studies that emphasize the importance of well-defined

criteria and structured scoring systems for maintaining fairness and accountability in assessment practices (Eagan, 2023).

Verified Participation

Refers to teachers' evidence-based process of confirming students' attendance, involvement, and performance in extracurricular activities before awarding merit points. Findings showed that teachers relied on attendance records, videos, photographs, certificates, and feedback from advisers or coaches rather than assumptions or informal reports. This practice is significant because unverified participation can lead to biased, inaccurate, or contested merit-point decisions. The findings suggest that verification serves as a critical mechanism for protecting the credibility and fairness of the merit-point system. By triangulating evidence from multiple sources, teachers were able to confirm the authenticity and extent of students' involvement and apply the same standards across participants. This implies that documentation does not merely support record-keeping; it functions as a safeguard against favoritism, misinformation, and subjective judgment. Thus, verified participation strengthens transparency, consistency, and trust in merit allocation, supporting previous studies that emphasize verification mechanisms as essential for fair and accurate assessment practices (Munna, 2021).

Equitable Treatment

Refers to the consistent and transparent application of standardized criteria in awarding merit points to all students participating in extracurricular activities. Findings revealed that teachers deliberately explained the merit-point system, applied uniform standards, documented participation, and gave constructive feedback to minimize misunderstanding and prevent favoritism. This practice is important because merit-point systems may lose credibility when students perceive that recognition is influenced by personal relationships rather than actual performance and verified involvement. The findings suggest that equitable treatment functions as a relational and procedural safeguard in merit-point implementation. By communicating expectations to students and parents and by applying the same criteria to all participants, teachers strengthened trust, reduced possible conflict, and promoted acceptance of merit-point decisions (Chory, 2023). This implies that fairness is not limited to equal point distribution but also involves transparency, professional objectivity, and clear communication throughout the process. (Eagan, 2023).

The findings align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), indicating that teachers' consistent and fair implementation of merit points, through clear criteria, verified participation, and equitable treatment, supports students' psychological needs. Such practices promote a sense of competence by recognizing effort, leadership, and contributions based on objective standards, while also strengthening relatedness through fair and respectful teacher-student interactions. Transparent, consistently applied criteria further support autonomy, as students can understand, accept, and internalize the merit-point system as a supportive rather than controlling mechanism. Overall, a fair and transparent merit-point system enhances student engagement, reinforces trust in the institution, and contributes to a psychologically supportive school environment (Morrison, 2018).

Proposed Standard Operating Procedure in Computing Merit Points for Students' Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Building on the findings of this study, a proposed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is presented to establish a uniform and systematic approach to awarding merit points for students' participation in extracurricular activities. The SOP is designed to promote holistic student development by formally recognizing participation as a meaningful contributor to both academic and personal growth. Anchored in the identified bases for merit allocation, the proposed rubric consists of four criteria: Active Participation, Advanced Competition Level, Demonstrated Achievement, and Sustained Commitment. Each criterion is assigned an equal weight of 25 points, yielding a total of 100 merit points. This equal distribution ensures balanced recognition of students' involvement, effort, and performance across various dimensions of extracurricular engagement.

The SOP further outlines clear, comprehensive guidelines for teachers to evaluate student participation, including specific indicators and corresponding merit-point allocations for each criterion (see Appendix G). To operationalize the system within academic grading, 50% of the total computed merit points is combined with 50% of the student's academic grade.

This integration provides a structured mechanism for acknowledging extracurricular contributions without undermining academic standards. The findings suggest that such a system not only standardizes the awarding of merit points but also reinforces fairness, transparency, and consistency in assessment practices. Moreover, it supports students who actively represent

the school in various activities, recognizing the time, effort, and commitment required alongside their academic responsibilities. Overall, the proposed SOP contributes to a more equitable and development-oriented evaluation system that aligns institutional practices to foster well-rounded learners.

4. Conclusion

This study successfully achieved its objective of exploring teachers' experiences in implementing merit points for students participating in extracurricular activities. The findings revealed that extracurricular programs contribute significantly to students' holistic development by fostering motivation, confidence, leadership, responsibility, and active engagement in school life. Teachers awarded merit points based on clear indicators, including students' participation, level of competition, achievements, and sustained commitment, while ensuring fairness through transparent criteria, verification procedures, and equitable implementation. These practices demonstrate that a well-structured merit-point system serves not only as a recognition mechanism but also as a strategy for encouraging meaningful student participation in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of standardized implementation procedures to ensure consistency and fairness across schools. The findings provide practical guidance for school administrators and teachers in strengthening extracurricular recognition systems and supporting students' overall development. To further enhance the effectiveness of merit-point implementation, schools are encouraged to adopt and continuously refine standardized operating procedures that promote transparency and consistency. Future studies may examine the implementation of merit-point systems in different educational contexts and investigate their long-term influence on students' academic, behavioral, and personal development.

References

- Ahmed, S. Z., Sultan, S., Khan, Z., & Fameeda. (2023). Effectiveness of reward as a modifier on students' behavior at primary level. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 7(6), 95–104.
- Alviento, S. G. (2018). Effectiveness of the performance of the student government of North Luzon Philippines State College. *Research in Pedagogy*, 8(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.17810/2015.67>

- Bautista, L. G. (2025). Contemporary reward system and its relation to students' motivation and level of performance in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao 8. *IJRP (International Journal of Research Publications)*, 172(1), 232–238. <https://doi.org/10.47119/IJRP1001721520257820>
- Bernabe, J. B., Guevara, P. P., Martizano, C. A., & Pedroso, J. E. (2025). Students' Views on Extracurricular Activities in Enhancing Social Skills and Self-Concept. *Social Lens*, 2(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.69971/sl.2.2.2025.32>
- Bhusal, Y. P. (2024). Perceptions of teachers and students on extracurricular activities. *Shaheed Smriti Journal*, 13(10), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.3126/shaheedsmriti.v13i10.76809>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Chen, Z. (2023). The Influence of School's Reward Systems on Students' Development. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 1822–1827.
- Chory, R. (2023). Fairness matters in higher education: Student classroom justice perceptions and behavioral responses. *9th International Conference on Higher Education Advances (HEAd'23)*, 385–392. <https://doi.org/10.4995/HEAd23.2023.16315>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Department of Education. (2006). *DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2006: Addendum to DepEd Order No. 6, s. 2005 on the selection of honor pupils/students in public elementary and secondary schools*. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2006/03/01/do-10-s-2006-addendum-to-deped-order-no-6-s-2005-on-the-selection-of-honor-pupils-students-in-public-elementary-and-secondary-schools/>
- Eagan, T. (2023). Unlocking student success: The power of success criteria, relationships, and clarity. *NECTFL Review*, (90), 95–102. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1382629.pdf>
- European Commission. (2022). *Recognition of prior learning in Europe*. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/eu/news/recognition-of-prior-learning-in-europe>
- Feldman, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2005). The role of school-based extracurricular activities in adolescent development: A comprehensive review and future directions. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(2), 159–210.
- Fredricks, J. A., & Eccles, J. S. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? Concurrent and longitudinal relations. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(4), 698–713.
- Gieg, S., Oyarzun, L., Reardon, J., & Gant, J. C. (2017). The Impact of Student Organizations on Sense of Belonging for International Students. *Journal of the Student Personnel Association at Indiana University*, 44, 1–14. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/jiuspa/article/view/23646>
- Howard, J. L., Bureau, J., Guay, F., Chong, J. X. Y., & Ryan, R. M. (2021). Student Motivation and associated outcomes: A meta-analysis from self-determination theory. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(6), 1300–1323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620966789>
- Jiang, Y., & Nair, S. (2025). Competition and Reward Practices: Evidence from Public Schools. *The Accounting Review*, 100(5), 207–235. <https://doi.org/10.2308/TAR-2024-0041>
- Jones M., Jr. (2026). *Extracurricular activities' influence on high school students' academic achievement* [Georgia Southern University]. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/3077>
- Kakungulu, S. J. (2024). The role of extracurricular activities in student development. *Eurasian Experiment Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 26–30.
- Krisna, E. (2025). The Impact of Extracurricular Sports Programs on High School Students' Discipline and Academic Achievement. *Journal of Salutare*, 2(2), 20–27. <https://doi.org/10.62872/t7vsq857>
- Kulal, A., Abhishek, N., Meghashree, & Kanchan, S. G. (2022). Impact of Non-academic Responsibilities of Teachers on Teaching Quality. *JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH*, 17(2), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.36268/JTER/17202>
- Lyoba, S. M., & Mwila, P. M. (2022). Effectiveness of Extracurricular Activities on Students' Learning Processes in Public Secondary Schools in Sikonge District, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 28(2), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2022/v28i230673>

- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Morris, E. (2019). *Participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement: A comprehensive review* [Western Kentucky University].
<https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/3097>
- Morrison, K. (2018). Students' Perceptions of Unfair Discipline in School. *The Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 53(2), 21–45.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/45372875>
- Munna, A. S. (2021). Assessment and verification: A higher education perspective. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, 15(3), 425–431.
<https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v15i3.20080>
- Prazna, L., & Isy, F. (2024). The Impact of Extracurricular Arts Education on Creativity Among High School Students. *International Journal of Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning Innovation*, 2(2), 69–76.
<https://doi.org/10.35335/curriculum.v2i2.164>
- Putra, P. D., Agusti, I. S., & Hastuti, P. (2022). Commitment, motivation, and involvement of students in improving academic performance. *2nd International Conference of Strategic Issues on Economics, Business and, Education (ICoSIEBE 2021)*, 193–200.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.220104.029>
- Rahateellah, H., & Azmi, N. (2025). School clubs for soft skills learning and development. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 12(5).
<https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v12i5.5998>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective: Definitions, Theory, Practices, and Future Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>
- Tabigo-on, R. (2025). Supreme Student Government Organizational Climate and Empowerment Level of High School Student-Leaders. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 42(1), 133–146.
<https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.42010>
- Vansteenkiste, M., Ryan, R. M., & Soenens, B. (2020). Basic psychological need theory: Advancements, critical themes, and future directions. *Motivation and Emotion*, 44, 1–31.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09818-1>
- Viray-Castillejos, B. (2023). Teachers' Use of Reward System: Inputs for Students Motivation Enhancement. *AIDE Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 3(1), 169–179.
<https://doi.org/10.56648/aide-irj.v3i1.61>
- Wong, M., & Thomson, M. M. (2014). The effect of rewards on student motivation. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Psychologia-Paedagogia*, 59(2), 105–114.
<https://doaj.org/article/8cd90f7173fa4f1c92deefda1f2deff7>
- Zarrett, N., Liu, Y., Vandell, D. L., & Simpkins, S. D. (2021). The role of organized activities in supporting youth moral and civic character development: A review of the literature. *Adolescent Research Review*, 6(2), 199–227.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-020-00142-1>
- Zurina, A. S., Nur'Izzati, Z., Hukil Sino, K. K., Mohamad, K. M. H., & Norinsan, K. O. (2018). E-Merit as a Tool to Evaluate Students' participation on Soft Skills Development. *Proceedings of Innovative Teaching and Learning Research Day*, 14.

How to cite this article:

Pacas, A., Alayon, M. F., Ramin, W. A. D., Alviso, K. L. C., & Bercaiso, J. K. B. (2026). Exploring Teachers' Experience in the Implementation of Giving Merit Points to Students Participating in Extracurricular Activities. *Journal of Education and Learning Research*, 4(1), 9-21.