

*Descriptive Analysis Study of the Impact that Student Leadership, Youth Organizations, and
Positive Self-Motivation has upon Students' Grade Point Average and Academic Attitude*

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Abstract

FFA is a youth organization that is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of student by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Through research, the FFA mission is being upheld by confirming that the organization positively affects grade point average. This study shows the importance of FFA, leadership activities and positive grades. Thirty-six students of freshmen were surveyed and results are shown in chapter 3.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the study

This study analyzes through descriptive research, relative interactions between youth student organizations and grade point average. This study will use previous performed research, as well as non-experimental research to examine the positive relationship between those students who are active in FFA, grade point average (GPA) and college attendance.

The following factors will be included while conducting the non-experimental research; student grade point average, the anticipation of students to attend a post-secondary establishment, and academic attitude among approximately forty high school students active in FFA.

Background

The FFA is a youth organization that allows students to development leadership skills through actively engaging in leadership activities. The FFA Organization has strong a strong motto, a clear mission and a creed that the organization and its members abide by. Students in the organization are honored for their achievements in leadership and scholarship.

Statement of the problem

Currently there is has been little research completed to study the effects of FFA and GPA in high schools.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze whether being involved in FFA has a positive impact on student academic achievement.

Research Questions (non-experimental):

- 1) Does FFA encourage students to excel academically?

- 2) Do the leadership skills that students obtain during high school, cause students gain confidence, causing their grade point averages to increase?

Null hypothesis

Students active in FFA have greater confidence and GPA.

Do students display a better understanding of motivation and self-worth due to their participation in student organizations?

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Known Facts and Statistics. The FFA mission; The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education. To accomplish its mission, FFA does the following things;

- develops competent and assertive agriculture leadership,
- increases awareness of the global and technological importance of agriculture and its contribution to our well-being,
- strengthens the confidence of agriculture students in themselves and their work, promotes the intelligent choice and establishment of an agriculture career, encourages achievement in supervised agricultural experience programs, encourages wise management of economic, environmental and human resources of the community,
- develops interpersonal skills in teamwork, communications, human relations and social interaction,
- builds character and promotes citizenship, volunteerism and patriotism,
- promotes cooperation and cooperative among all people,
- promotes healthy lifestyles and
- encourages excellence in scholarship(National FFA, 2012).

The National FFA website(2012) states that FFA continues to help the next generation rise up to meet challenges by helping its members to develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of career pathways. So today we are still the Future Farmers of America. But we are the Future Biologists, Future Chemists, Future Veterinarians, Future Engineers and Future Entrepreneurs of America, too.

Positive Results of Studies Comparing Student Organizations and Grade Point Average.

The following reflects a number of articles providing information of studies on student organizations and positive grade point average; after reviewing multiple research articles collective positive results were shown. Studies from the University of Missouri, University of Florida as well as Purdue University have all shown positive correlations between student organizations and grade point average. According to Dr. Garton, Dr. Kitchel and Dr. Ball of the University of Missouri, there is a positive association with enrollment in FFA and/or 4-H and the attainment of a bachelor's degree. This information was based on a study performed at the university. The questions asked referenced prior enrollment, level of student involvement and retention in college. In the study, academic performance was measured by cumulative grade point average (GPA) and was obtained from individual student records. The difference when comparing the GPA of those enrolled in secondary agriculture and those who were not was a difference of .31. This may seem like a small difference, but this could be the difference between receiving a university scholarship (3.02) and not receiving one (2.71) (Garton, Kithcel and Smith, 2007). There was not a correlation found between the levels of involvement in a secondary agriculture program. Park and Dyer(2005) state that "students who are involved in FFA hold one more collegiate leadership position than those students who are not involved in FFA.

College Retention. When studying college retention rates of students enrolled in secondary education and those who were not there was a little over a ten percent difference. There was a ninety-three percent retention rate of those who were enrolled in Secondary Agriculture and an eighty-two percent retention rate of those who not. Those enrolled in

Secondary Agriculture had almost one-hundred percent retention. This is very important to those in FFA and leadership showing the positive impact it has on academic attitude.

Participation and Student Organization. According to Hawkins (2010) participation in student organizations can lead to the development of social and leadership skills, higher retention rates, and further success. Her study examined the grade point average of students enrolled in Purdue University. The results showed a significant connection between involvement and GPA with student organization members. These members received a much higher grade point average than the general student population. Astin(1984) states that “the greater the student’s involvement with college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development”(p.529). Therefore, students must be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities.

Importance of Leadership. The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities(1997) State in Returning to our Roots, leadership in undergraduates is an important component of a student’s educational experience. The report suggested that universities assist students in developing critical thinking, communication, global perspectives, responsibility, leadership and cooperation. Undergraduate student felt they needed leadership development at the college level. Eight-seven percent of undergraduates in a study of 283 students believed training in leadership was needed at the college level(Schumacher and Swan, 1993). Many agriculture colleges housing agriculture education departments require undergraduate leadership courses for students enrolled in that college. Extracurricular experience of college students contributed greatly to leadership development and prepare student with the skills necessary for workplace competence(Kuh, 1995).

Conclusion

Throughout this literature review, there has been discussion about how FFA and 4-H have a positive influence on a student's academic performance and retention. Also, there is discussion that these organizations have impacted student's leadership before entering college and while in college.

In the study that was performed at the University of Missouri there were conflicting results. The first research question wanted to find out if there was a difference between the GPA of students enrolled in secondary agriculture courses and those not enrolled. There was not a difference that had a great statistical value. This contradicts the results that were found in 2003. The difference for this group of entering freshmen had a larger statistical difference. It is hard to compare two different groups of students to see how accurate this information is. Some people may believe that secondary agriculture doesn't have as big an impact on students' academic performance. The second research question compared State FFA Degree scores with academic performance. The GPA of these students was slightly higher than that of the entering freshmen who had secondary agriculture experience. Others who aren't involved in secondary agriculture may believe that the State Degree doesn't have an impact on students. Actually, the minimum requirements are what set those apart from receiving or not receiving the award. Finally, the last objective of the study was to see if there is a relationship between the retention of students and involvement in secondary agriculture. When comparing the students who were involved in secondary agriculture in 1998 with those who weren't there is not a large difference. When comparing the results of the entering freshmen in 2003 there is a more noteworthy difference. For those who were involved in secondary agriculture they had a 10 percent higher retention rate. With this study, it can be seen how some may believe that there is not a difference between those

students who are involved in agriculture and those who are not. Being involved in secondary agriculture I feel that it has made a difference in everyone's life. The study that was conducted at the University of Florida's purpose was to discuss how FFA and/or 4-H have impacted students' leadership in college. FFA and 4-H are two of the 65 different high school organizations that students participated in (Park and Dyer, 2005). Students who participated in FFA or 4-H held more leadership positions and were involved in more than one organization at one time. FFA and 4-H members held offices in the organizations as well as others. Though I do believe my leadership roles throughout my high school as well college have driven me to earn my degree. I have learned self-worth, discipline and reasonability by being involved and encourage all of my current high school students to do the same.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

Research Methods

Research design, a student survey, written by the researcher, collection of data and descriptive analyses are the research methods used in this non-experimental descriptive analysis study.

Research Design

When analyzing the data relating to each survey question descriptive analyses will be utilized.

Study Group Description

The participants of the survey are thirty-six high school students in agriculture education classes. These students are freshmen to seniors in high school that have chosen to be in agriculture education classes because they have an interest in agriculture. They have joined the youth organization that accompanies agriculture education courses.

Data Collection

During data collection a survey, written by the researcher, was given to students. The students were asked to be completely honest and answer the questions to the best of their ability. They were all anonymous by just circling answers in the survey; therefore no identifying factors were present.

Instrument

1.)How do you feel being in a youth organization positively affects you GPA?

Not at all

somewhat

greatly

2.) How likely are you to attend a post-secondary establishment as a result of being a youth organization?

Very unlikely not likely somewhat likely very likely

3.) Leadership activities have made me a more confident person

Strongly agree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

4.) I feel more motivated to excel academically as a result of being in FFA.

Strongly agree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

5.) FFA has had a positive influence on my performance and attitude academically.

Strongly agree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

6.) I keep my grades up to remain off of the academic ineligibility list so I may participate in extracurricular activities.

Strongly agree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

Data Analysis Plan

I plan to put the information in a chart in order to analyze the data. I will put the questions down the side of the chart, the responses to the questions across the top of the chart and then use roman numerals to mark how each student responded to each survey question. This method will allow me to answer the research questions by comparing the data via a chart. The proper research has been completed to analyze the impact FFA has on GPA. I have added questions to the research instrument to fully complete the study. I have offered the students to respond that FFA did not affect them by answering properly on the instrument.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Analysis of Data

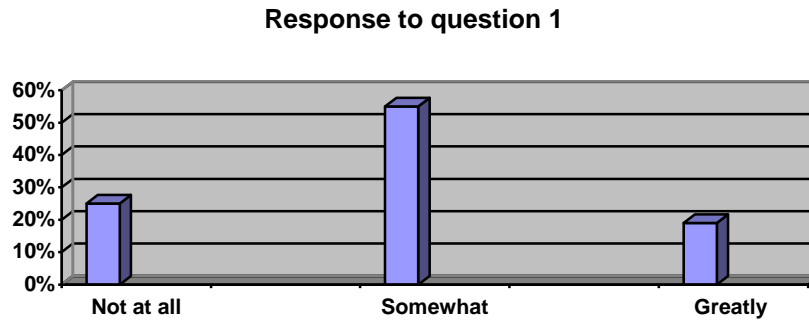


Figure 1. Twenty-two percent of the students surveyed said that there was no positive affect from being in an youth organization on their grade point average, fifty-five percent said it somewhat affected their GPA and seven percent said it greatly affected grade point average.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 shows result when studying FFA and student attitude towards academics.

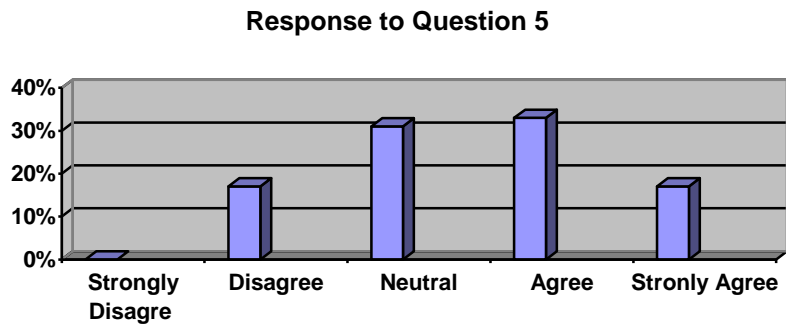


Figure 2. Shows the statistics of the responses to question number 5 on the survey. The question was; I feel more motivated to excel academically as a result of being in FFA. Responses to this question were as follows; no one strongly disagree, seventeen percent disagreed, thirty-one percent was neutral, thirty-three percent agreed and seventeen percent strongly agreed.

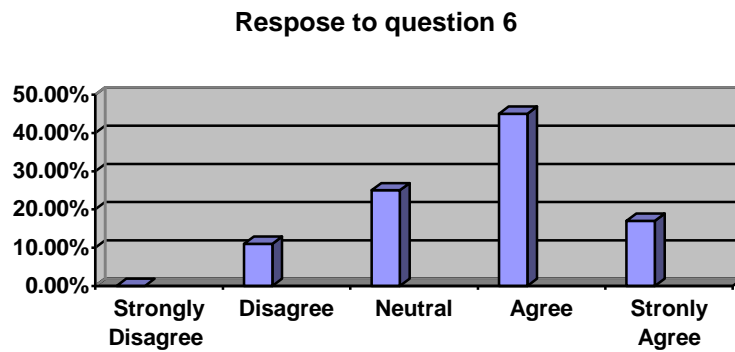


Figure 3. Shows responses to question six on the survey which was; FFA has had a positive influence on my performance and attitude academically. Two percent strongly disagreed with the

statement, eleven percent said they disagreed, twenty-five percent were neutral, forty-five agreed and seventeen percent strongly agreed.

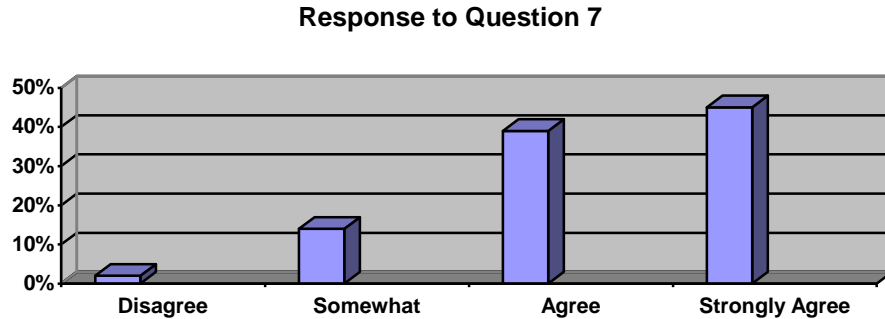


Figure 4. Shows the attitude towards participation in extracurricular activities. The question on the survey was; I keep my grades up to remain off of the academic ineligibility list so I may participate in extracurricular activities. The numbers are as follows; two percent disagreed, fourteen said somewhat, thirty-nine percent agreed and forty-five percent strongly agreed.

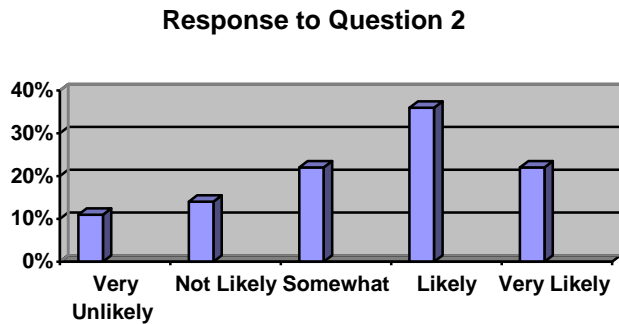


Figure 5. Shows the results of question number two on the survey which was; how likely are you to attend a post secondary establishment as a result of being in a youth organization. Eleven percent said they were very unlikely to attend, fourteen percent said they were not likely, twenty-two percent said somewhat, thirty-six percent said likely and twenty-two percent said very likely.

Chapter Five

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

After extensive analysis of data; research shows that being in a youth organization or extracurricular activity affects students academically. Most students responded to the survey by stating that they felt that youth organizations somewhat had an affect on their GPA, FFA motivated, and excelled their performance academically and they keep their grades up to remain off of the ineligibility list to participate in the extracurricular activities. Because so many students are influenced academically by youth organizations and extracurricular activities all students should be strongly encouraged to join some type of youth organization or extracurricular activity. As presented in the data, over fifty percent of the students said that being in a youth organization positively affected their grade point average. Thirty-three percent responded that they feel more motivated to excel academically as a result of being in FFA and forty-fiver percent responded that FFA has had a positive influence on my performance and attitude academically. These studies can be used to persuade those who have not taken the opportunity to join any organizations; as a result of the strong leadership skills, strong academics and success that are shown by youth leaders is it imperative that all students are involved. The current problem that is a concern is that students lack motivation to join any youth organizations therefore, all teachers, and other members must motivate all adolescents to become involved. The way to motivate these adolescents is by showing them the research that has been and conduct further research to find out what motivate these students. Surveys, literature reviews and interviews would be excellent ways to research motivating factors. Some recommendations in order to get students to join organizations would be to hold as many fun activities as possible, show them how important student organizations, academics and success futures are. If there are

dues, or payments required to join these organizations or activities that are prohibiting students from joining these things have rewards for those who join, pay the dues, or fee. Another option for these students would be find a sponsor for the students need assistance.

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Appendices

Question					
1: how do you feel being in a youth organization positively affects your GPA?	Not at all IIII III 9	Somewhat IIII IIII IIII IIII 20		Greatly IIII II 7	
2: How likely are you to attend to attend a post-secondary establishment as a result of being in a youth organization.	Very unlikely IIII 4	Not likely IIII 5	Somewhat IIII III 8	Likely IIII IIII I 11	Very likely IIII III 8
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4.) Leadership activities have make me a more confident person	I 1	III 3	IIII IIII 10	IIII IIII IIII 15	IIII II 7
5.)I feel more motivated to excel academically as a result of being in FFA		IIII I 6	IIII IIII II 11	IIII IIII II 12	IIII I 6
5.) FFA has had a positive influence on my performance and attitude academically	I 1	III 4	IIII IIII 9	IIII IIII IIII I 16	IIII I 6
7.) I keep my grades up to remain of the academic ineligibility list so I may participate in extracurricular activities		I 1	IIII 5	IIII IIII IIII 14	IIII IIII IIII I 16