University Campus Life and Activities Aligned with Students' Preferences towards Designing Competency Model Framework

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Abstract. Universities are keen to offer a holistic student experience, which is imparted through participation in activities, involvement in clubs, and community engagement. Campus life and activities contribute to skills and attributes enhance employability and interpersonal competencies. Within this context, this research aims to examine students' preferences for features of campus life and activities to acquire life skills and competencies. The study explores the perceptions of the students at Gulf University, Bahrain about campus life and participation in activities for interpersonal and academic achievement. The research deployed both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The quantitative methodology relied on questionnaire, with responses from 405 students across the programs. The results were analysed to identify students' preferences for activities and development of competencies. As part of the qualitative methodology, a focus group interview was conducted involving 10 students. The results of the questionnaire and content analysis of the focus group interview illustrated that students embrace campus life and appreciate the opportunity to participate in a wide range of events and activities. All the students were interested in sports activities. The role of activities in developing a range of competencies for employability and holistic learning was overlooked by a considerable number of students. The results were utilized to design a four-to five-year competency framework supporting universities to prepare graduates who stand out to employers because of their interpersonal competencies such as reflecting a distinguished character, passion for taking responsibility, and leading initiatives in their profession, community, and environment. The framework supports ongoing improvement in competency identification,

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redesigning campus life and activities, assessing the impact, and feeding back for the next cycle.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are responsive to the social, economic, and environmental challenges driven by globalization and technological revolution. With massification and marketization, universities compete to attract students while providing a holistic learning experience (Buckley & Lee, 2021)(Buckley & Lee, 2021). This manifests in a wider campus life which not only enriches the student experience but also contributes to developing the ethos, skills, and attributes appropriate for employability and lifelong learning. This is imparted through students' participation in social, cultural, and sports activities, involvement in clubs, societies, and volunteering programs, travel and field trips, and so on, leading to physical and psychological wellbeing. Thus, university campus life and activities enhance the learning experience beyond the classroom. Students' participation in a wide range of events and activities contributes to better academic performance, character development, social belongingness, and interest in community engagement (Christison, 2013). Disciplinary knowledge and skills are important for employment; however, graduates with soft skills such as teamworking, leadership, time management, motivation, adaptability, communication, self-esteem, resilience, and being an initiator are highly preferred by employers. Involvement in clubs and societies not only supports students in nurturing their hobbies and talents but also creates social connection with like-minded people and reduces stress and depression. Interpersonal and character-building skills are highly important in the workplace but are not sufficiently practised in the classroom. Participation in diverse activities (namely sports, social, and cultural events, development initiatives towards profession, community, and environment, field trips and international travel, voluntary work, and any other activities outside the curriculum) eventually provides learning experiences which are conducive to personal success, job success, and engagement with the community. Academicians and educational policymakers emphasize the importance of developing and improving critical thinking skills, teamwork, leadership, communication, and creativity, which are pivotal for academic life and personal growth (Щеглова, 2019).

There is a wide range of research focusing on the role of extra-curricular activities in providing a better learning experience and developing employability skills (Buckley & Lee, 2021; Massoni, 2011; Nguyen, 2022; Winstone, Balloo, Gravett, Jacobs, & Keen, 2022; Щеглова, 2019). However, there is a need to develop a competency framework as an institutional approach for ongoing improvement. This research was conducted within the context of Gulf University (GU), which is a young and dynamic higher education provider in the Kingdom of Bahrain. This research aims to identify GU students' preferences for features of campus life and activities to acquire meaningful life skills and competencies. Further, it aims to examine the impact of campus life and activities on students' skills and

competencies. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that identifying skills and competencies, and aligning those with extra-curricular activities, is not enough for higher education institutions. It is pertinent for universities to find a framework for designing campus life and activities which impact life skills and graduate outcomes as a method for ongoing enhancement.

This research used quantitative and qualitative methodology to address the research aims. The results of the questionnaire and focus group interview were analysed. The findings were utilized to design a four- to five-year competency framework cycle that supports university management to be responsive in preparing work-ready graduates who are highly preferred by employers for their interpersonal competencies such as reflecting a distinguished character, passion for taking responsibility, and leading initiatives in their profession, community, and environment, in addition to discipline-specific knowledge. The framework facilitates the ongoing improvement in terms of competency identification supported by students' preferences, industry needs, and futuristic research studies, redesigning campus life and activities, assessing the impact, and feeding back to the next cycle.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Campus Life in Higher Education Institutions
Campus life comprises students' experiences of university facilities, infrastructure, and resources, including buildings, classrooms, laboratories, studios, libraries, cafeterias, interactive zones, sports arrangements, events, and activities. Campus life leads to a purposeful community where students and faculty engage intellectually, and curricular and co-curricular activities complement each other *(Brooks & Boyer, 2019)*. Individual students cannot experience belongingness unless it is conferred by the community as a whole, supported by the institutional philosophy. Social connections/belongingness contribute to academic achievement, perseverance, and graduation (Nunn, 2021). In order to adjust to their new environment, fresh students should be provided with opportunities to attend orientation programs carefully designed to cover core and topical issues. Administrators, the student support office, and academic staff collectively support newly admitted students to adjust into campus life (Asare, Ako, & Kwame, 2021).

There is a paradigm shift in 21st-century higher education from passive instructor-driven teaching to student-centric active learning where each student gets the exposure to respond uniquely in diverse learning contexts (Tawalbeh, El Marsafawy, & Roy, 2019). Service quality is a critical concern in higher education which can attract potential students and retain current students. A study conducted within the context of a university in Pakistan illustrated that student engagement depends on the quality of campus life. Campus life, faculty, teaching and learning, leadership, and academic planning are the major dimensions of service quality (Iqbal & Zikria, 2022) (Kanar & Bouckenooghe, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted daily activities as well as global business markets (AlZgool, Ahmed, Pahi, & Ammar, 2020). Due to the pandemic, higher

education institutions have been forced to shift to remote teaching or hybrid learning, including for practical courses. This transition forced academicians to rethink spending priorities, favouring the virtual learning environment and digital technologies (Hussein, 2020). Online learning has posed a challenge to the student learning experience for laboratory-based courses which require hands-on experience. Amidst disruption in the education process, virtual labs, remote-controlled labs, or video-based labs were provided to students when face-to-face laboratory sessions on campus could not take place (Gamage et al., 2020). Such efforts have to some extent solved the learning challenges; however, interpersonal skills, competencies, and a range of other attributes have not been effectively developed. Campus life and facilities for extra-curricular activities not only provide opportunities to display organizational skills, leadership skills, and other social skills, but also contribute to academic achievement, even though this is not a consistent finding in research literature. Academic grades are also affected by on-campus recreational activities underpinned by initiatives, creativity, innovation, cross-cultural linkage, diversity, and so on (Otto, 1977).

2.2. Role of Extra-Curricular Activities in Developing Skills and Competencies

A considerable amount of learning takes place outside the classroom in a myriad of activities such as surfing the internet, playing or listening to music, watching drama or movies, painting, playing digital games, and so on (Reinders, 2020). Extra-curricular activities are planned and implemented in order to strengthen mental health and academic success and build community. Apart from domain-specific skills, employers place great importance on values and personality traits. Participation in extra-curricular activities indirectly impacts academic performance in a positive way (Buckley & Lee, 2021). Extra-curricular activities are voluntary, but they provide learning experiences which are not delivered through the curriculum. Participation in sport, music, and drama activities reduces behavioural problems in students. When the students feel honoured for their achievements, they also develop better self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence (Massoni, 2011). Extra-curricular activities serve as a channel to reflect classroom learning in real-life situations. Involvement in clubs and societies supports building networks that can facilitate career development (Щеглова, 2019).

The wider university experience not only includes a formal degree but also considers social wellbeing and employability benefits. Students' involvement in clubs and societies provides a social space where physical and psychological energy is manifested into meaningful non-academic achievements (Winstone et al., 2022). University students are required to acquire teamwork skills through diverse activities related to sports, music, volunteer work, professional practices beyond the curriculum, and collaborative work with international students. A cross-sectional study conducted at a Spanish university reflected that leadership and teamwork skills support the overall development of the students, prepare them well for a challenging profession, and complement academic experience. Six soft skills have been identified to support teamwork, namely interpersonal skills, communication, leadership, collaboration, decision making, and adaptability (de Prada Creo, Mareque, & Portela-Pino, 2021). Institutional and non-institutional

learning environments foster student engagement in learning in higher education institutions. Conceptually, student engagement can be perceived along four different strands: motivation and agency, transactional engagement, institutional support, and active citizenship (Russell & Slater, 2011).

Participation in activities that complement discipline-specific knowledge and skill actually contributes to achievement of learning outcomes. For example, a student majoring in software engineering might find it meaningful to join the IT club, which might increase professional success (Nguyen, 2022). Students participating in university activities demonstrate higher self-efficacy driven by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students' preferences for activities vary depending on the nature of the academic program in which they are enrolled, their year of undergraduate study, and their personal interests. Time is not a constraint to engaging in multiple activities, provided the students take responsibility for their own learning and are ready to develop employability skills (Mulrooney, 2017).

Research conducted within the context of the Eshelman School of Pharmacy at the University of North Carolina confirmed that co-curricular activities complement the curriculum and assessment of activities meets the requirements of accreditation. Co-curricular mapping provides skill development opportunities to various stakeholders. Involvement in student organizations contributes to developing communication, collaboration, ethics, professionalism, and in-depth knowledge amongst pharmacy students (Zeeman, Bush, Cox, & McLaughlin, 2019). Engagement in activities creates belongingness amongst students within the university. Students in general do not perceive the importance of extra-curricular activities for employability and graduate outcomes. Lifelong learning prepares learners to accept the complexities and challenges of their career (Milner, Cousins, & McGowan, 2016).

Given the context of the changing economy, it is imperative for university management to provide opportunities for authentic learning that helps students to apply their creativity and critical thinking to become marketable graduates. Students are encouraged to be members of welfare groups, academic clubs, societies, publication and media groups, cultural clubs, sports teams, and so on, based on their passions and interests. To increase participation, it is important to identify the needs and preferences of the student community while developing a diverse range of activities and events (Ahyad et al., 2020). Lack of participation in activities can be due to students attaching less value to engaging in activities, attitudes of peers and social norms, or external locus of control. Higher education institutions must inculcate the culture of campus life and activities to invest for personal capital (Greenbank, 2015).

Background literature articulates the scope of existing research on the role of campus life and activities in developing employability, lifelong learning, and social bonding, as well as the challenges faced by universities in engaging students in such activities. Hence there is a gap in determining institutional imperatives to develop a competency framework cycle, monitor the effectiveness in terms of stakeholder feedback and graduate success, and ensure ongoing enhancement of campus life and the learning experience.

3. Methodology

This research is primarily descriptive in nature and comprises both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The quantitative element involved a questionnaire capturing the preferences of students for campus life and participation in a wide range of activities that enhance the development of soft skills. The researchers developed a questionnaire and the convenience sampling technique was applied to collect responses from students at Gulf University (GU) across the offered programs (Al-Rawi, Al-Dayyeni, & Reda, 2021). A total of 405 responses were collected; 52.3% of respondents were female and 47.7% were male. Out of the total respondents, 37.5% were from the Bachelor in Human Resources Management program, 32.5% were from the Bachelor in Mass Communication program, 16.5% were from the Bachelor in Interior Design Engineering program, and the remaining 13.5% were from the Bachelor in Accounting & Finance program. The results of the survey were analysed to derive charts identifying students' preferences for types of activities and how they wished to conduct such activities. Further, a deductive approach was followed to collect qualitative data through a focus group interview involving students from different programs. Well-structured interview questions were developed focusing on students' expectations of campus life and to what extent GU was meeting those expectations. Ten students across the programs participated in the focus group interview, a face-to-face session conducted on the university campus. Students were invited by the Student Support Office upon the request of the researchers after explaining the purpose of the interview. The researchers met the interviewees in a face-to-face session in the university library in which each question was presented, followed by the responses of the participants. Students were asked to give their honest opinion, and it was not mandatory to receive responses from each of them. Notes were taken by one of the researchers. Content analysis was performed to interpret the interview transcripts within identified categories, reflecting the perceptions of the students on the impact of campus life on learning abilities, competencies, social belongingness, academic performance, and so on (Gundumogula, 2020).

Combining the results of the questionnaire and focus group interview, the researchers designed a competency framework cycle that supports university management to be responsive in preparing work-ready graduates who are distinguished in terms of character, skills, and competencies suitable for 21st century jobs.

4. Results

This section presents the quantitative analysis of the survey questionnaire conducted among the students at GU and the qualitative analysis of the focus group interview in which ten students participated.

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Fifty-four percent of the respondents preferred activities to be conducted on campus; 30.86% of them were ready to participate in events outside GU. Only 15.06% were interested in joining activities at international universities. Fifty-four percent of the respondents liked to take part in outdoor events and activities. Only

34.32% preferred to conduct online events and activities. The majority (70.37%) of respondents would like to participate in group activities.

Figure 1 illustrates the preferences of the students for different types of sport activities.
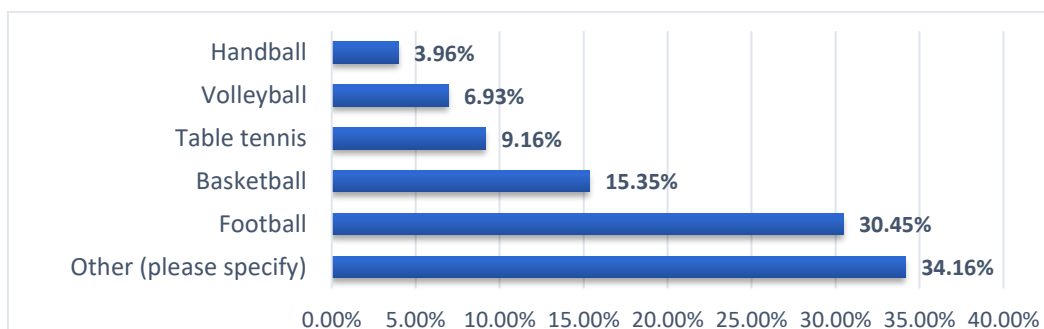
Figure 1: Preferences of Students for Sport Activities

Figure 1 depicts that 30.45% of the respondents were interested in participating in football, followed by 15.35% opting for basketball. Apart from football, basketball, table tennis, handball, and volleyball, some of them (34.16%) would like opportunities for other sports; however, they did not specify their preferred option.
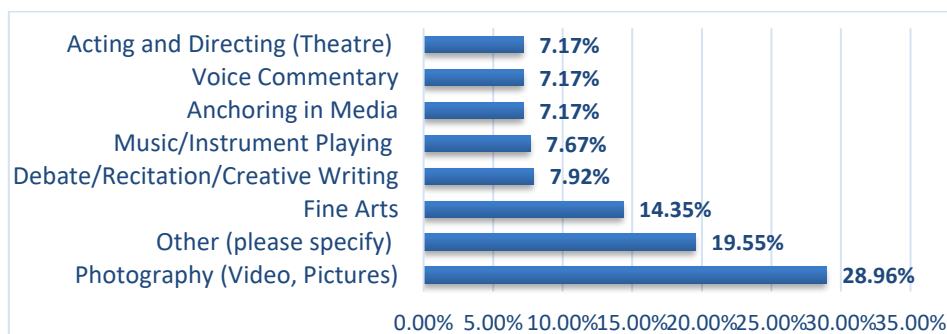
Figure 2 depicts the preferences of students for participating in social and cultural activities.
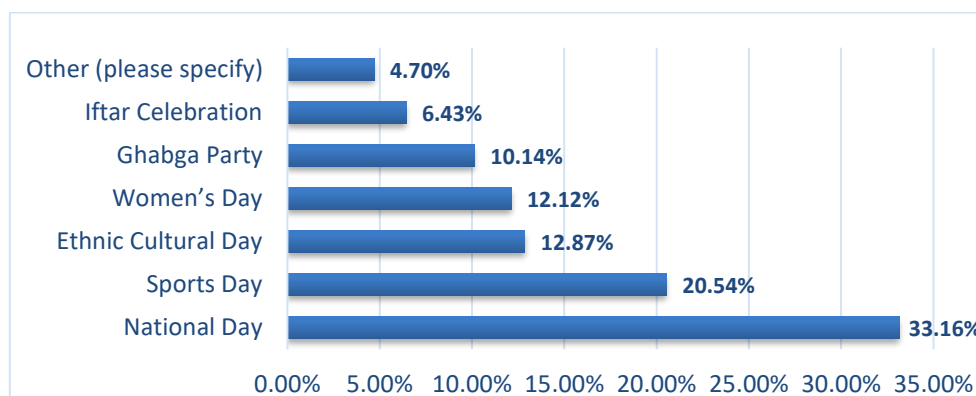
Figure 2: Preferences of Students for Social & Cultural Activities

Figure 2 demonstrates that 33.16% of the respondents preferred to participate in social events like National Day celebrations, followed by 20.54% who preferred to take part in Sports Day. Another 12.87% of the respondents would like to participate in Ethnic Cultural Day.

Respondents further revealed preferences towards art-related activities illustrated below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Preferences of Students for Art-related Activities

Figure 3 depicts that with regard to art-related activities, 28.96% of the respondents preferred photography, followed by 14.35% who preferred fine arts. Respondents showed minimal interest in debate, music, acting and directing, voice commentary, etc.
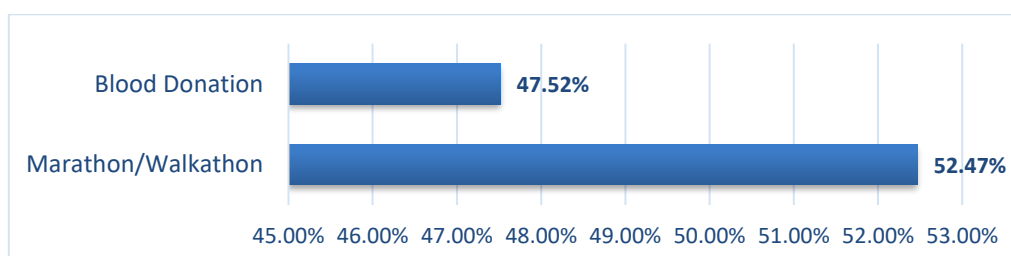
Students expressed their preferences towards community engagement activities as depicted in Figure 4.
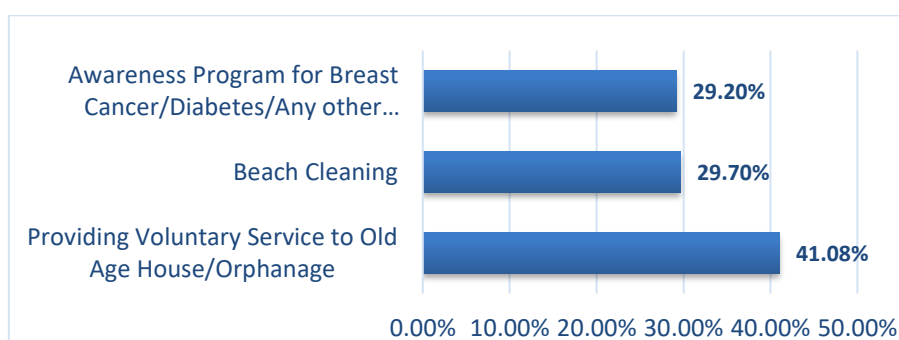
Figure 4: Preferences of Students for Community Service

Figure 4 illustrates that 41.08% of the respondents would like to visit an old people's home or orphanage, 29.70% of them would like to be involved in beach cleaning, and another 29.20% showed interest in joining an awareness campaign for terminal and chronic diseases.

Students' preferences for social engagements are presented in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Preferences of Students for Social Engagements

Figure 5 illustrates that for social events, 52.47% of the respondents expressed willingness to participate in a marathon/walkathon, and the remaining 47.52% would be happy to donate blood.

With regard to career development activities, the respondents expressed their preferences as depicted below in Figure 6.
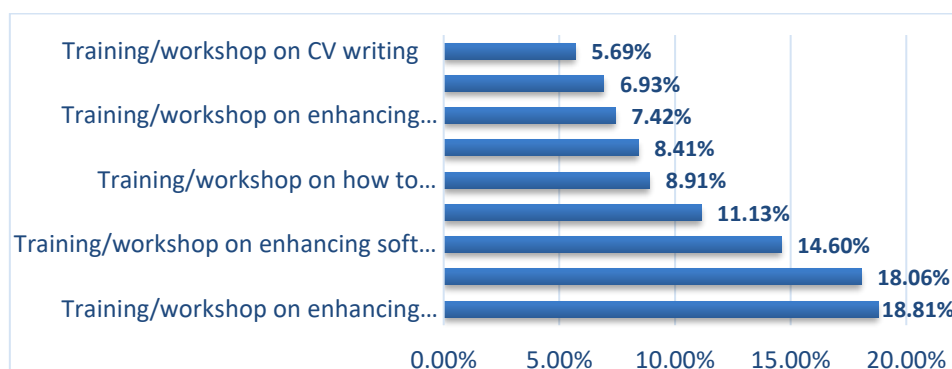
Figure 6: Preferences of Students for Career Development Activities

Figure 6 shows that 18.81% of the respondents were keen to join training/a workshop on enhancing communication skills; 18.06% were interested in participating in a job fair; 14.60% were willing to attend training on enhancing soft skills; 11.13% were motivated to attend training on preparing business plans, and so on.

The questionnaire also focused on the range of skills and competencies that the students expected to develop through events and activities. Figure 7 presents the perceptions of the respondents in terms of developing a range of attributes through participating in events and activities.
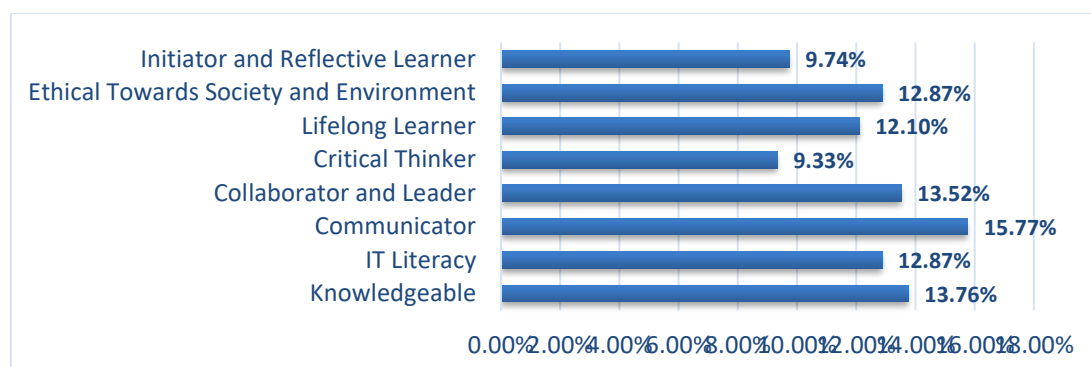
Figure 7: Perceptions of the Students on Developing Attributes

Figure 7 depicts that 15.7% of the respondents believed that communication skills could be developed through participation in university events and activities. Only 13.76% of them thought that participation would make them knowledgeable, followed by 13.52% who considered that collaboration and leadership skills could be developed. This infers that students in general are not well aware of the importance of campus life and participation in activities in developing competencies for employability and lifelong learning.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

The researchers conducted a focus group interview with ten students representing different academic programs. The interview transcript was analysed to interpret the results in the given context, using deductive qualitative analysis ((El Marsafawy, Roy, & Ali, 2022). A summary of the interview transcript is presented below:

• The participating students' overall expectation for an ideal campus life in terms of enjoyment was to have good friends with whom they can chat, eat, laugh, and gossip. They expressed that it was good to have friends in the campus for hanging out, having fun, and frolicking in leisure time. One comment was: "*For me, campus life means sports complex, gym, café, and so on.*" Campus life seemed to provide an encouraging environment with events, competitions, inter-university events, and so on.

• In terms of social life, the students expected campus life to offer an environment which allows close bonding between colleagues/classmates, cordial relations between students and faculty, and support from staff with a feeling of collegiality. Beyond classroom learning, the students felt the university should provide opportunities for personal interaction and networking and should instil in them the enthusiasm and motivation to achieve personal and professional goals. They expected student clubs to be appropriate means to create belongingness and empathy and provide opportunities for teamwork. One student said, with conviction, *"We need to conduct workshops, events, and activities with complete freedom."*

• The students expressed that campus life results in developing the following skills and competencies: self-confidence, leadership and teambuilding, social skills, communication, curiosity, discovering talent, social responsibility, continuous personal development, initiative, creativity, and commitment. Campus life supports the students to acquire lifelong learning skills along with the attributes required for their profession.

• The interviewees said that joining university provides opportunities for nurturing hobbies and passions for music, art, photography, literature, sports, etc. Students can become responsible for managing clubs/societies and activities, which fosters creativity, bonding, and enterprising spirit. Music, photography, art and design, drama, debate, and sports clubs not only support the talent and potential of the students beyond their specialization, but also bring honour to the university through students' achievements in competitions and events. Entrepreneurial pursuits of students are required to be supported/facilitated by clubs/societies within the university community.

• Students expressed that GU provides opportunities to experience a healthy and vibrant campus life. The campus has a football ground, a basketball court, and open spaces with innovative seating arrangements. The studio café is unique, with nice furniture and a green area which motivates them to do individual and collaborative work, relax, eat, and chat over the day. "*There is no doubt that our university conducts so many activities and events and we have so much fun taking part in events*" was the candid expression from one participant. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the expectations and realities of campus life.

• The events and activities conducted in and outside GU contributed significantly to students' social life and belongingness within the university.

Students were very happy with the initiatives of the university to organize a wide range of activities such as sports, cultural activities, social events, students meeting up to provide feedback on important matters, and celebratory events to recognize the achievements of distinguished students. While participating and organizing activities, students collaborate with colleagues, do brainstorming, and work closely with faculty and staff. This strengthens empathy and social bonding between students, and between students and staff. The GU football and basketball teams are very popular amongst students; supporting the teams contributes to belongingness, and students appreciate that the teams are bringing fame and boosting the community image of the university. "*We are so proud of our football and basketball teams; they deserve the best!*" was the spontaneous reply from one participant.

• Currently, student clubs are not active. However, students are encouraged to form clubs where groups of students with similar interests and talents can collaborate to nurture their hobbies. This helps the students to showcase skills and talents, either through internal events or competitions/events outside the university. One student commented, "*Why don't we have HR club, IT club, or designer club?*" Due to the pandemic, a limited number of students are coming to campus regularly. However, the football and basketball teams are well organized, and receive coaching from professional trainers. The teams participate in competitions/league tournaments and play all their matches with full support from the university.

• Students preferred to receive support in an emergency from the Student Support Office for matters other than academics and students' activities. Given the university's approach to supporting the students, there is close interaction between the students and faculty which ensures that for any urgent personal matter, students are comfortable to approach faculty/staff for support. The Student Council is active, with annually elected members, which represents the student voice. A student council chair/member attends university council meetings regularly, collecting the issues to be addressed on behalf of the student community. One student mentioned that "*Student council members are elected in such an exciting and competitive manner; we get a feeling of real election on the campus.*"

• The positive campus life at GU helps students acquire life skills, social skills, and interpersonal skills appropriate for the labour market and beyond. Participation in a wide range of activities on the campus, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, definitely contributes to their personality development, inquisitiveness to learn, responsibility, collaboration, communication, teambuilding, leadership, problem-solving and creativity. GU management encourages students' initiatives towards organizing events and activities.

• The students have opportunities to interact with external people such as industry experts and academicians from other universities through events, activities, competitions, training, and workshops. Visits to universities outside Bahrain, such as Ajman University (United Arab Emirates) and Münster University of Applied Sciences (Germany), allow students to collaborate closely with students and experts from international universities to accomplish projects/activities. This provides networking opportunities for ongoing and future collaboration. One student proudly said that "*I was part of an Ajman University field trip and it was an awesome experience; I wish we could have such a lovely*

campus and facilities." Additionally, work-based learning or internships provide opportunities to interact with industry professionals.

•	Students are motivated to participate in events/activities conducted at GU. Certificates, prizes, and trophies awarded to students truly encourage participation in extra-curricular activities and motivate them to organize such activities on the campus. "*We feel so special when our achievements are published in the media. Social media likes and comments are so encouraging.*" Students get support from instructors if they are late in submitting assignments or miss classes due to commitments in such events/activities. The challenges in organizing events/activities lie in getting good participation and having inadequate time to complete preparations, along with other commitments related to family and part-time work.

•	Some of the interviewees did not see a link between academic performance and participation in university events and activities. However, around two or three of them felt that involvement in activities, events, and competitions had strengthened their academics through the acquisition of interpersonal skills and competencies. "*Those who are motivated to develop a wider range of skills and attributes will get the benefits out of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Those who are not engaged and indifferent to the campus life experience are reluctant to participate in activities*".

•	Recommendations for a perfect campus life at GU were: to create a wider range of spaces for food courts/cafés and sport activities; to conduct more events for fun and teambuilding involving students from all programs; to encourage students to form clubs and societies and pursue their hobbies; to enhance facilities to incubate and support entrepreneurial pursuits; to organize a wider range of inter-university competitions, symposia, and seminars, and provide opportunities for networking and collaborative work. Effective engagement with industry professionals through events and gathering their reflections on the labour market is also needed. Students would like to be involved in marketing/recruiting new students.

Within this approach, content analysis was conducted to reflect the interpretation of the narratives collected from the focus group interview; the results are displayed in Table 1. The analysis identified the categories underpinning the impact of campus life and activities on students' skills and competencies.

Table 1: Content Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Category	Identified issues	Interpretation
Campus life: Enjoyment/entertainment	Expectations: good friends who can chat and have fun; sports complex, gym; happening place with events, competitions, inter-university events, etc. GU experience: football ground, basketball court, studio café and other open spaces; socio-cultural	-Healthy and vibrant campus life at GU -Fun, enjoy, relax (ideal) -Recreational and sport facilities -Wide range of events and activities

	activities and events which bring enjoyment	
Campus life: Social life/belongingness	Expectation: close bonding between colleagues/classmates, cordial relations between students and faculty, support from staff; student clubs for belongingness, empathy and teamwork GU experience: wide range of activities such as sports, cultural activities, social events, and celebratory events; studio café; football and basketball teams	-Social life and belongingness -Bringing fame and community image to the university -Collaboration and empathy
Campus life: Developing a range of competencies	Expectations: self-confidence, leadership and teambuilding, social skills, communication, curiosity, discovering talent, social responsibility, continuous personal development, initiative, creativity, commitment; lifelong learning GU experience: skills and competencies which are essential for employability, such as communication, teambuilding and leadership, initiative and responsibility, problem-solving and creativity	-Lifelong learning skills for and beyond the attributes required for profession -Acquisition of employability skills including soft skills
Campus life: Fostering hobbies/passions	Expectation: nurturing hobbies and passion for music, art, photography, literature, sports etc.; music club, photography club, art and design club, drama club, debate club; bringing honour to the university GU experience: well-organized football and basketball teams; active Student Council	-Encouragement to initiate and form student clubs -Football and basketball teams receive professional coaching -Disruption due to pandemic
Campus life: Support from university in case of emergency	Expectation: Support from Student Support Office for any contingency need	-Student Support Office in case of emergency

	GU experience: personal support given to students in case of emergency	-Support by faculty and administrative staff
Impact of campus life on learning capabilities	Acquiring life skills, social skills and interpersonal skills appropriate for job; opportunities for personal development, inquisitiveness to learn, accountability for work, collaboration	-Positive campus life resulting in interpersonal skills and character-building -Participation in activities embraces campus life
Network with community	Opportunity to interact with external people through events, activities, competitions, training, and workshops	-Opportunity to network with industry and community -Exposure to collaborate with students at other universities
Motivation to participate in events/activities conducted at GU	Certificates, prizes, and trophies awarded; appreciation; media coverage	-Motivation, encouragement and appreciation from management -Social media posts/announcements -Awards from university
Academic performance	No direct link between academic performance and participation in university events; benefit in terms of interpersonal skills and competencies	-Challenge to involve all students in university events/activities -Those who are motivated to develop a wider range of practical and life experiences will participate in extra-curricular activities for better learning opportunities
Recommendations for a perfect campus life at GU	Create more spaces for food courts/cafés and sport activities; conduct events for fun and teambuilding; encourage students to form clubs and societies; enhance facilities to incubate entrepreneurship; organize inter-university competitions, symposia, seminars; more media coverage	-Build network and collaboration with community and industry professionals -Create more spaces for collaborative learning and relaxation

The results of the questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of the students are interested in participating in sports activities (Figure 1). This might be due to the university's football and basketball teams, the support, exposure, and professional coaching they receive. A good number of the students would like to visit an orphanage or old people's home (Figure 4) for community service and would enjoy participating in a marathon or walkathon (Figure 5). Content analysis of the focus group interview transcripts illustrated that students at GU embrace campus life and appreciate the initiatives to conduct a wide range of events and activities. They recognize the importance of events and activities for creating social bonding, providing opportunities to network with industry and community, and developing employability skills and interpersonal competencies (Table 1).

Even though the futuristic research highlight the importance of interpersonal skills and competencies, a considerable number of students overlook the opportunities to develop competencies through campus life and activities.

5. Discussion

Analysis of the questionnaire and focus group interview revealed that students appreciate the efforts of the university to conduct social, cultural, sport, and community engagement activities, providing campus life for students' all-round development and an enhanced learning experience. However, the findings of the questionnaire inferred that students are not completely aware of the role of activities in developing employability skills and interpersonal competencies appropriate for their future professions. This might be due to lack of maturity of the high school graduates about holistic personality development. Moreover, the majority of them did not identify the competencies they need to develop which are not adequately developed through classroom learning alone. Consequently, students' preferences for typical social, cultural, sporting, and community engagement activities, clubs and societies are not expressed holistically to support the university in determining the kind of activities which impact life skills and graduate outcomes. The findings are in alignment with the existing literature, which also highlights the challenges faced by universities in improving awareness amongst students about campus life and the benefits of participation in events and activities (Nguyen, 2022). It is noteworthy that the perceptions of the students who participated in the focus group interview were much more conclusive and reflective, compared to the findings of the questionnaire.

The qualitative analysis of the interview results categorically highlights the impact of campus life and activities on life skills, social skills, and competencies contributing to career success and personal achievement (Winstone et al., 2022). Student participants in the focus group interview revealed their expectations of campus life in terms of enjoyment, belongingness, developing a range of competencies, fostering hobbies, and support in case of emergency. They also responded to the question asking whether or not GU was meeting their expectations in terms of their actual experiences. Students commented that participation in diverse activities and events was helping them to develop employability skills such as teamwork, leadership, communication, responsibility

and accountability, creativity, self-confidence, time management, adaptability, and initiative, which would support them in coping with the challenges of the labour market (Jamal, 2012) (Kanar & Bouckenooghe, 2021). Students appreciated the efforts of the university to offer a holistic experience and wider campus life in terms of learning environment, participation in sports, social, and cultural activities/events, student clubs/sport teams, community involvement, and so on. Students acknowledged the appreciation given to them for their achievements, including media coverage and awards. Even though they were somewhat motivated to participate in and organize university events and activities to embrace campus life, they opined that overall participation of the student community in activities and events was less. The students at GU need to better recognize the importance of campus life and the role of activities in developing a range of competencies in preparation for the labour market.

5.1 Proposed Competency Framework Cycle

Considering the findings and endeavour of the university, the researchers propose the four- to five-year competency framework cycle which is recommended to be practised at higher education institutions. The proposed framework is presented in Figure 8.

4 TO 5 YEARS COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK CYCLE
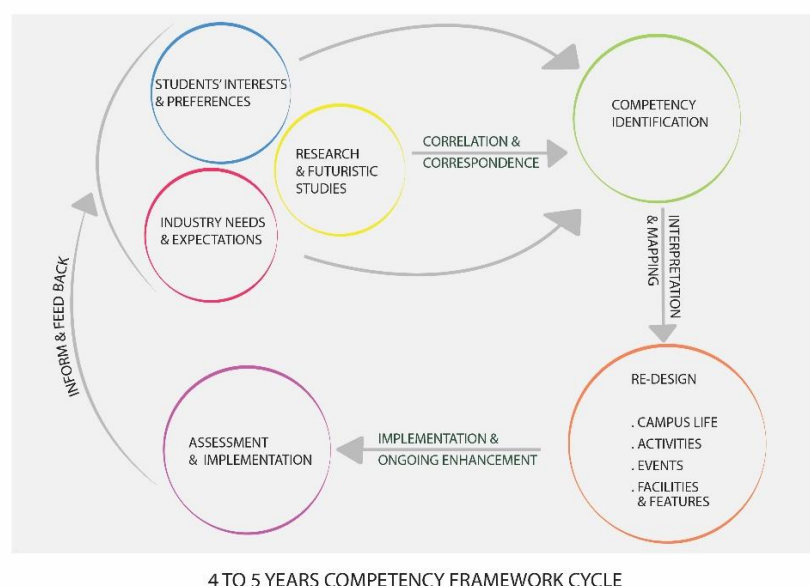
Figure 8: 4–5 Year Competency Framework Cycle

Figure 8 illustrates how students' interests and preferences, industry needs and expectations, research and futuristic research studies provide input for competency identification. There is a correlation between industry needs for jobs and students' interests and preferences for activities and campus life. Studies on graduate competencies and future jobs provide further material for identifying the competencies that students need to develop. It is recommended that the team responsible for competency identification conduct brainstorming to interpret and map these competencies with the range of activities offered and the style of expected campus life in the university. This leads to redesigning events and

activities, facilities and features to improve comprehensive and all-round student experience and graduate success. Consequently, implementation and ongoing enhancement of campus life and student activities take place. This is followed by assessment and evaluation of students' competencies and graduate achievements every four to five years. Stakeholders are informed about the outcome of evaluation of the students' competencies. The input is fed into the ongoing development in the next cycle of identifying competencies to be targeted through enhanced activities, clubs, campus life, and facilities.

The practical implication of this research is to guide educators and academic policymakers to adopt the framework in university practices towards collecting input from different stakeholders for competency identification; reflecting that into the redesigning of campus life, activities, and facilities; implementing and evaluating the enhanced environment and activities; and incorporating the feedback into the next cycle for continuous improvement. This needs to be embedded within the strategies of the university, rather than isolated or random initiatives. The approach is not to look for annual outcomes but rather to complete the phases of the cycle over a period of four to five years to reflect on the effects of students' gained competencies on graduate success.

Future research could include measuring the links between students' academic/professional achievements and features of university campus life and activities.

6. Conclusion

This research focuses on students' preferences for features of campus life and activities to acquire meaningful life skills and competencies as well as the impact of campus life and activities on GU students' competencies. The findings revealed that the students mostly preferred to participate in sports activities, followed by social and cultural events. Qualitative analysis of the focus group interview responses revealed the students' expectations of a vibrant campus life with opportunities for enjoyment, events and activities, nurturing passions for hobbies, and socializing. The interview results also revealed to what extent the students' experiences met their expectations in terms of gained interpersonal skills and competencies. However, the role of activities in developing a range of competencies for employability and a holistic learning experience was overlooked by a considerable number of students. The practical implication of this research lies in designing a four to five year competency framework cycle as a tool for ongoing improvement in identifying competencies informed by students' preferences, industry needs and futuristic research studies, which are correlated. Interpretation and mapping between required competencies and activities can guide the university to redesign campus life and activities, facilities for holistic learning, and experiences needed for a successful practical and professional life. This eventually leads to implementation and continuous improvement in terms of enhanced facilities, campus life, and activities. Over the four to five year cycle, assessment and evaluation of the success of the competency framework is conducted, providing feedback for the next competency framework cycle while closing the loop.

7. References

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