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Field Lab on Higher Education Management

"Analysis of Factors and Drivers in Graduates Success among Portugal, India and Italy Extracurricular Activities Before University"

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Abstract

Success is a controversial concept, and this field lab aims to delineate different factors and drivers in graduates' success across Portugal, India and Italy. The following research focuses on extracurricular activities performed before enrolling in University. The study starts with a literature review in order to support the notion of our research topic; qualitative analysis was made through two focus groups per nationality. From these, a questionnaire was developed in order to test the findings of the qualitative research. Findings show a possible correlation between people of different nationalities, income and gender and how they perceive the importance of extracurricular activities.

Keywords: extracurricular activities, success factors, graduates, higher education.

Summary

Introduction

"An idle time is the devil's playground"

English proverb

The goal of this research is to delineate possible factors and drivers of success in graduates from business schools; these factors were divided into activities performed during childhood, adolescence and University, and individual characteristics. It was also necessary to assess how different individuals perceive success. These factors were later used to analyse possible differences among three countries, that are Portugal, India and Italy.

These topics were split in four within the group, so that each person could develop an exhaustive research on a specific issue. The following research has the purpose of explaining how different types of students perceive the importance of extracurricular activities performed before University. The activities to be analysed were taken from six focus groups, two per nationality, and then quantitatively analysed after administering a survey that included also socio-demographic variables such as nationality, gender and parental education.

The research will be organised in three main blocks: literature review, methodology, and result analysis. The first one will summarise and examine the main works published over the years regarding the types of extracurricular activities affecting students' development and their efficacy in leading them to success. In the methodology block will be defined the whole research process (both qualitative and quantitative): the main characteristics of the target population, the guidelines for the focus groups and the topics covered in the questionnaire, how the data was gathered and the tests performed to look for significant relationships. The results analysis will present the main findings of the focus groups and the questionnaire, show which tests appear to be significant for each variable, and the characteristics of the

respondents that may have influenced their answers. Finally, the last chapters will discuss the limitations of the research, and expose the most relevant conclusions.

Literature Review

There are many studies regarding the effects of sports, clubs or other extracurricular activities on children's development. A consistent part of the literature on this topic is focused on the correlation between participation in leisure activities during high school as independent variable and grades as dependent, in the same time frame. Researches that rely only on the high school grades tend to produce contrasting results. Kubilius and Lee (2004), basing on a survey from 230 students enlisted in a college program for gifted students, conclude that most of these talented students show a high level of participation in extracurricular activities; however, according to Stewart (2008), there is no significant relationship. A plausible explanation of these conflicting results is that leisure activities, in the short term, tend to take time from studying, with a negative effect on grades. The most selected activities within the sample were sport teams, music bands and various academic clubs, but also volunteering and religious activities were present

A longitudinal study is one involving repeated measurements of a sample over a long period of time. They have been often used in psychology and sociology; regarding the topic of this research, they have been used to better understand the impact of extracurricular activities on the child's development on a long term perspective. An advantage of this kind of study when analysing extracurricular activities is the possibility to explore a higher number of variables; while the GPA at the same time as when the activities are performed may not be explanatory enough to define success, with these long-term studies it is possible to use, for example, the kind of behaviours assumed by the adolescents, or their chance to go and finish college and to find a good job.

The longitudinal study "*Effects of Peer Status and Extracurricular Activities on Goals and Achievement*" already suggested a correlation between certain activities (with a particular focus on athletics and sports), the peer status, and the student's college aspirations. Teenagers engaged in extracurricular activities may have a higher self-esteem and more desire of being recognized after high-school. This appeared to be true also when other factors, like socio-economical and parents' background, had a low contribution. Similar conclusions come from Marsh (1992), in which the only meaningful effects of extracurricular activities were found on the self-esteem. Marsh also identified a conflict between students' higher self-perceptions linked to these activities and reduced time to get the skills necessary to complete the college goals; this appears to be true especially for sports, because of the high attention received and the effort requested.

The Michigan Study of Adolescent and Adult Life Transitions was a longitudinal study involving about 1800 students in the American state of Michigan, whose life was followed in eight different waves, from when they were 11-12 to when they were 25-26 years old. Based on that, Eccles et al. (1999, 2003) analysed the impact of leisure activities during childhood and adolescence on a number of variables, such as grades and the likelihood to attend college, but also others, as risky behaviours[1] and motivation on school attending. Many activities, such as being in a sport team, participating in the school government and clubs were significantly correlated with grades during high school and the likelihood to attend and finish college. Sports participants, however, according to the general stereotype, were also more likely to have risky behaviours in young age. Performing arts, instead, did not show any significant correlation with any variable.

[1] Examples of risky behaviours analysed were drinking, assuming drugs, driving while alcohol impaired or riding with an impaired driver

McNeal (1995), using the longitudinal study "High School and Beyond" (HS&B)[2], analysed the relationship between taking part in leisure activities and the chance of dropping out high school. As a result, athletics seem to be the area that most significantly reduces the odds of abandoning high school; participation in vocational clubs and fine arts do not show a significant effect. The reason for this may be due to the fact that these activities are taken by students that already have a high chance of finishing high school, therefore, the positive effects of art classes are hard to be noticed.

Prosocial activities refer to volunteering activities, community service and church-related activities. Eccles (2003) found many correlations between these activities and grades and school satisfaction, although mostly non-significant. Specifically regarding church activities, a significant characteristic noticed by Kubilius and Lee (2004) is the duration of students' involvement: among 230 talented students involved in a gifted University program, between 10 and 20% have been participating in church related activities since more than 10 years, the longest time recorded in the sample. This is a reasonable finding, hypothesizing that church encourages a steady participation. Moreover, adolescents engaged in church-related activities may benefit in psychological assistance from adults and different social interactions with peers. These findings contrast previous studies (Olszewski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 1987) which indicates that gifted students are more likely to come from non-religious families.

Another recorded phenomenon among gifted students is bilingualism. This does not mean, as many people believe, knowing perfectly and without accents two or more languages, having learned them during childhood; every person can become bilingual, regardless of his age and the accent. However, language learning is proved to be much easier when during infancy or adolescence, and while it cannot be considered an extracurricular activity on par with sports and clubs, many advantages of learning a second or third language are known.

[2] The study began in 1980 and finished in 1992

Kubilius and Lee (2004), analysing the answers of 230 high school talented students who subscribed to a summer University program, found out that the 76,9% of them was enrolled in a foreign language course. The results also suggested a correlation between mathematics ability and interest in learning a foreign language.

Bilinguals and multi-linguals, compared to monolinguals, benefit in a high number of fields: they tend to have a higher comprehension of their native language (Ewert, 2006), and on average show better understanding of different cultures, better memory and higher abilities in problem solving, being able to see the problem from multiple perspectives (Cummins, 1981). These combined advantages also seem to help counteracting age-related mental declines (Bialystok, 2004). Finally, being bilingual also offers many advantages in terms of employability in many fields.

All of these aspects have been researched separately and related to various indicators, but there is none that looks at all these factors at the same time and connects them to graduate success. Therefore, our research will try to sum-up the different variables and to link them to school success.

Methodology

Qualitative Research: Focus Groups

The research was developed in three main passages: a secondary data collection, described in the previous chapter, performed to have an initial understanding of the topic; a qualitative research, used to gain insights and formulate hypotheses; a quantitative research, in order to prove or disprove the hypotheses and formulate a conclusion.

Qualitative research means an exploratory research design, used to gain insights and generate ideas on a specific topic that needs to be explored. Two main ways to perform a qualitative

research are in-depth interviews and focus groups. While the former are unstructured interviews conducted to a person at the time, the latter work as a spontaneous group discussion, in which the interviewees can feel relaxed and free to expose their opinions; in a similar way to a brainstorming session, these group interviews may bring to light interpretations about the topic that were not previously considered by the researchers, giving the possibility to make more hypotheses and leading to the construction of a more focused questionnaire during a following quantitative research.

Focus groups usually involve a number of respondents between five and twelve. They are carefully screened to be sure they are members of the population which is usually similar or identical to the population that will be later analysed in the quantitative research[3]. It is a good practice to avoid interviewing larger groups, in order to avoid the creation of so-called sub-groups that may bias the whole interview. Two focus group per nationality were selected, each composed by 5 respondents. The requirements for participating to the focus group were: being Portuguese, Italian or Indian (depending on the focus group), and having obtained a Master in Management, Finance or Economics in the two previous years (2013 or 2014). This time frame was chosen in order to avoid a bias from people who have been in the job market for a longer time, and a maximum period of two years usually means being in an entry-level position. Regarding the Indian focus groups, it was opted to interview older people, specifically among participants to an MBA program. This choice was made for reasons of convenience, as it proved impossible to gather respondents within the target population in our time frame.

The physical setting is also important, and varied depending on the availability: in order to have an optimal quality for the audio and video recordings, without background noises and disturbances, a meeting room was chosen when possible. Also, since the interviewees were

[3] Marketing Research: An European Approach, pp. 156-172

constantly monitored, it was important to keep an informal atmosphere to help the group members feel relaxed for the whole duration of the interviews, that was about two hours per session.

A guide of all the topics to be discussed during the focus groups was developed. This guide comprehended both specific and open questions, and a set of broader issues that could have been developed in the advancement of the interviews. The topics were divided into five macro-categories, that were: socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewees; family background and extracurricular activities during childhood and adolescence; bachelor and master experiences; the participants' personal definition of success; a projective technique about the factors that might influence the development and future success of a five years old child. The complete and detailed list of topics is provided in the Secondary Appendix.

On September 30th, at NOVA School of Business and Economics, a pilot focus group was conducted, with the purpose of understanding how to conduct one. This trial was preceded by a preliminary secondary data research on the subject, which was needed to develop an initial list of the possible topics. The moderator was the thesis advisor, Professor Elizabete Cardoso, and this pilot comprehended five participants. Their age ranged from 23 to 32 years old; differently from the participants to the successive focus groups, all of the pilot participants were currently enrolled in NOVA University for the Master or CEMS program. Three of the participants were of Italian nationality, the fourth was from China raised in Italy, and the fifth one was Syrian.

The pilot focus group also had the objective of gaining some initial insight on the subjects. This helped to test preliminary hypotheses that were based on the secondary data, and also to more accurately structure the following steps of the research.

Quantitative Research: Questionnaire

Using as a basis the preliminary secondary data research and the focus group findings, a questionnaire was created. It was done in order to quantitatively measure the information that was gathered through the focus groups, to complement qualitative data, as previous research (Wolff, 1993) showed that the use of both a qualitative and a quantitative research can strengthen the confidence in drawing the conclusions.

Coherently with the focus group participants, the respondents to the questionnaire were selected among business students who graduated from a Master in the years 2013 and 2014. In order to target only this specific sample, it included two pre-filter questions, asking if and when the interviewee obtained a Master degree in a business school.

The questionnaire had six blocks of questions, to cover all the topics explored during the qualitative analysis. Specifically, these were: pre-filter questions; background and activities before University; parental background and cultural activities undertook with the family; influences and activities performed during university; personal definition of success; socio-demographical characteristics.

Among these topics, there were five main types of questions: open questions and drill-down lists, used to assess the socio-demographic characteristics; pick & group questions, with the purpose of analysing the impact of different activities performed during the University on their development of soft skills and personality traits; finally, multiple choice and scale (from 1 to 10) questions were used in all the topics.

Regarding the analysis, each question was analysed through descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and range for the scale questions, and frequencies for the multiple choice questions. Statistical inference, to infer properties about the whole population, was applied mainly through analysis of variance, for metric variables (the scale questions) dependent on categorical ones, and contingency tables for the categorical variables. In order

to apply the central limit theorem, and assume a normality of the distribution of the answers, the minimum sample size required for each nationality group was of 30 respondents. To reach this objective, the questionnaire was spread on the Internet: most of the answers came through the help of social networks, such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Other ways used were e-mail and, mainly for Portuguese and some Italian respondents the Alumni network of NOVA University.

The total answers collected were 160, composed by 40 Indians, 46 Italians and 74 Portuguese. Male respondents were 84 and females were 76, and the age ranged from 22 to 33 years old, with a median value of 25.

It must be noted that, although the number of responses was high enough to apply the central limit theorem, the narrowness and uniformity of the sample were a limitation for the study; this should be taken in to account for the development of future researches.

Main Findings

Focus Group Results

The Portuguese and Italian interviewees for the focus groups were selected among alumni who completed their Master in an economic-related field and worked since no more than two years. Their age ranged from 23 to 26 years old. The Indian respondents, for reasons of convenience, were chosen among MBA students, with an age ranged between 28 and 36 years old.

The interviewees were asked about their background before University, especially which activities and studies they performed in their infancy or adolescence and how these helped them to perform better during University and in the workplace.

Focus Group Results: Sports and Music activities

Indian respondents had different experiences depending on their family background: six respondents were coming from a poor family or a very small village and may have practiced sports or played music while being children, but at some point had to quit all of these to focus on their education to meet the expectations of their families. For this category of respondents, extracurricular activities appear to be secondary: in a big country like India it is hard to become a successful sportsman, and since the competition in school is high, most of the efforts were directed on obtaining the best grades. Four respondents come from a completely different background, mostly related with a higher tenure of life, and said they had a higher independence and littler pressure; while knowing the importance of study, they also followed their personal inclinations and kept practicing leisure activities until college.

However, most of the respondents in both categories stressed out the importance of extracurricular activities, together with the study, for the child's development. One of them, for example, referring to how should the parents of a five years old child should behave, declared: «Let him grow in a dynamic environment, stimulate his creativity, let him try extracurricular activities, let him find his way.». Only two interviewees did not mention them in the projective technique. There are two possible reasons for this discrepancy: on one side, regardless of their background, most of the interviewees were MBA students with a senior position in a company, therefore with a financial security and the possibility to give their kids a better life than their own. Another aspect, pointed out by a respondent, is a change of trend from new parents: «We should give more importance to sports or other activities. If I think my son could be a very good basketball player, I will not push him to study engineering. Nowadays parents are much more open-minded». New generations seem to consider themselves more open-minded and may consider extracurricular activities not just as a diversion but also as a stimulus for children's growth.

Most of the Italian respondents participated in some kind of extracurricular activity during middle and high school; sports and music were both declared by four respondents; two respondents did theatre activities. One respondents, who played a sport (car racing) also on an agonistic level, says it helped him a lot: «I think it helped me a lot, because you need a high level of discipline to do sports at these levels». Even if sports were experienced by most of the respondents, only two of them pointed out their importance when asked in the projective technique. Four respondents also did some kind of work experience before University, in three cases unrelated with their future studies.

All of the Portuguese respondents also had participated in different types of extracurricular activities: nine out of ten respondents played one or more sports, one of them at an agonistic level; the second most experienced activities were catechism and scouts, with eight and six participants each; this type of activity will be deeply discussed in the next chapter. In most of the cases, the idea of doing these activities was originated by a parent, or their peer group. Music, arts lessons and community involvement were only experienced by three respondents. About the influence of these activities on their development, the most frequently used terms were social skills, time management, resilience, team work, and openness. Differently from the Italian respondents, all of the Portuguese participants marked the importance of sports in the projective technique. One of them declared: «I think that sports and languages are really important. If you have the opportunity, go to the professional level. It is good for your cv and allows you to develop personally».

Focus Group Results: Other Activities

Religious activities such as catechism and scouting appear to be mostly common among Portuguese respondents: eight out of ten respondents did catechism, and among them six had been in a scouts' organisation. However, only one respondent mentioned it in the projective technique, meaning the respondents may not perceive it to be important for a child's

development. Among the Italians, only one claims to have participated to several summer camps with a Catholic organisation, and no respondent mentioned it afterwards. Among the Indians, one respondent mentioned the importance of a religious education, both personally and in the projective technique: «Be religious, because religion itself can improve discipline and integrity, helps to be more self-confident».

Two other kinds of extracurricular activity to be spoken about are political involvement and community involvement, such as volunteer activities. Among the Portuguese respondents, one mentioned being actively involved within the community; however, four of them suggested the importance of volunteering activities, without mentioning if they did any of them.

Political involvement, at different levels, seems to be common among the Italian respondents, with four respondents who declared to have been school or class representatives. However, the importance of these themes was diminished. Volunteering activities were not much considered. Regarding the Indian respondents, none of these themes was mentioned in any topic.

Focus Group Results: Foreign Languages

English is taught as a foreign language in many parts of the world; it is part of the program in most Italian and Portuguese secondary and high schools; in India, it is one of the official languages together with Hindi, therefore Indian students tend to know it very well. English is also usually a primary requirement for most Business Schools in the world and later in the job market; for these reasons, all the respondents studied learned English at some point in their childhood or adolescence.

Regarding other languages, the situation is different: none of the Portuguese respondents mentioned having learned them before University; four Italians had learned a third language (two of them learned Spanish, one German and one French); none marked the importance of a third language, although one of them repeatedly mentioned the importance of studying

English since childhood. In India the old school system normally taught three languages: Hindi, English and a third language by choice. No foreign languages were accepted in this school system, that was followed by all the respondents over 30 years old; younger Indian students and the ones who studied in an international school, instead, had more a higher range of choices; for example, among the focus group participants, two had studied French. The other third languages mentioned were native language[4], mentioned by five respondents, and Punjabi and Sanskrit, with one respondent each.

Questionnaire Results: Demographics Data

The questionnaire was closed on the 24th of December, when it was completed by 160 respondents. Among them, 70 had obtained their Master Degree in 2013, and 90 in 2014, with an age that ranged from 22 to 33 years old (the median value is 25 years old).

Regarding the Nationality, 40 of the respondents were from Indian nationality, 46 Italian and 74 were Portuguese. Overall, they were almost equally divided in gender, with 76 females and 84 males; however, while Indians were equally distributed among males and females, among the Italian respondents only 14 were females and 32 males; the situation is the opposite for the Portuguese group, with 42 females and 32 males. Within the whole sample, most of the respondents, 112 out of 160, came from a Master in Management; 64 of them have between 1 year and 18 months of work experience. We analysed the distribution of the sample in the Secondary Appendixes.

Questionnaire Results: Extracurricular Activities

The third question in the questionnaire, the first one regarding extracurricular activities, was written as following: *"To which extent do you think that the following extracurricular*

[4] There are 20 officially registered languages in India, excluding Hindi and English, but the actual number of languages is higher and around 1365 rationalised mother tongues, according to the 2001 Census of India. In the text, the term native language generically refers to the most common language or dialect taught in the region the interviewees were grown.

activities contributed to your development?" The activities that were to be voted were, based on the qualitative research findings, *sports*, *music*, *foreign languages*, *volunteering activities*, *exchange programs*, *summer schools* and *religious activities*. Each activity had to be voted on a scale from 1 to 10, while an N/A option was available in case the respondent did not perform it.

The most selected activity was foreign languages, with 156 (97,5% of the sample) respondents who claimed having studied them before University. The second most selected was Sports, with 148 respondents (92,5%); volunteering and music were both at the third place, with 136 answers (85%).

When looking at how they think these activities contributed to their development, the situation is not much different: in the whole sample, the activity that appeared to be on average the most effective were the exchange programs, with an average voting of 8.03 scale points, followed by foreign language, that gained 7.91, and Sports with 7.0.

To understand the relationship between the variables in this question and other key variables in the study, we chose to perform the Anova: this is a model used to test if the average points given by different groups were equal. It is especially useful when comparing more than two groups without increasing the possibility of a type I error, or false positive, which occurs when the null hypothesis is true, but rejected, and is dependent on the significance level. This may happen when multiple t-tests between couples of groups are performed.

With the analysis of variance, the purpose was to analyse if there was a correlation between the importance given to a particular activity, and one of three main possible factors: *Nationality*, *Gender*, and the *Level of Education of the Highest Income Parent*, with the null hypothesis (H0) that there is no correlation between the factor and the activity performed.

In order to effectively perform an analysis of variance it is necessary to assume that the variance between groups are equal, a situation called *homoscedasticity*. To assess a

distribution for homoscedasticity, a Levene's test was performed, using 0.1 (10%) as a significance level; if the resulting p-value of the test was lower than the significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the results from the Anova model shows a minor robustness. In these cases, in which the Levene's test showed heteroscedasticity, two so-called robust tests of equality of means, a Welch and a Brown-Forsythe test, were performed. For both the Anova and the robust tests, the null hypotheses were rejected when the p-value was below a significance level of 10%.

Regarding gender, the Levene's test did not reject the homoscedasticity assumption for any of the seven activities. However, the Anova showed two only possible correlations: the first one is regarding sport activities, with a p-value of 0.009, and the second regarding Volunteering, with a p-value of 0.016. From this first analysis of variance, the only conclusions that can be made are that males (with an average of 7.5 scale points) consider sports more useful than females (6.5 points) for their own development; an opposite relationship is present for volunteering, where females gave 7.3 points on average and males 6.4. For more information, see the tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix 1, and the Graph 1 in the Appendix 2.

A second analysis involved looking for a relationship between these activities and the level of education of the highest income parent. The variable gathered in the questionnaire, originally divided in more options[5], for the purpose of this analysis was split in only three main categories: parents who did not attend or finish University, parents who did University only at an undergraduate level, and ones who also completed a Master, a PhD or another post-graduate program.

The Levene's test accepted the homoscedasticity hypothesis in three cases: music, summer school, and religious activities. For the other variables, robust tests were performed. Analysis

[5] In the questionnaire, the level of education was divided in 11 categories, from *Can't read/write* to *Phd* and *Masters Program*; given the low number of responses in many categories, it was decided to reduce it in only three categories.

of variance showed a significant relationship for music only, with a p-value of 0.7%. Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests were also significant in the cases of sports and foreign languages, with significances respectively of about 4% and below 0.1%[6]. In all of these cases, a lower value was attributed by the respondents coming from a less-cultured family. Respondents coming from parents who finished Bachelor gave, on average a significantly higher grade on the 1 to 10 scale to (see Appendix 2, Graph 2) music and foreign languages than respondents with a parent who continued his/her studies. However, this may be due to how the variable education of the highest-income parent is distributed among the nationalities.

The last analysis of variance operated was in relationship with the nationality: the Levene's test accepted the homoscedasticity for the variables sports, volunteering and religious activities; among those, the analysis showed a significant correlation for volunteering. Finally, the robust tests showed a relationship between nationality and foreign languages, exchange programs and summer schools[7].

From the average points given to these activities, (the graph 3 of the Appendix 2), it is possible to see that Portuguese respondents gave a higher importance to learning foreign languages (8.9 points) and summer schools (6.6 points), while Italians preferred the Exchange Programs (9 points) and Volunteering Activities (7.6 points). Indians showed a possible preference for Religious Activities and Music, but with no statistical significance.

It is notable that, in all the variables where the tests proved significant, respondents from Italy and Portugal give on average a similar amount of points, which may be due to the more similar cultures existing within the two countries.

Questionnaire Results: Projective Technique

The second question for the purpose of this study, and the fourth in the whole questionnaire, was exposed as a projective technique. It was written as following: *"Now imagine a person*

[6] Tables 3, 4 and 5 in the Appendix 1.
[7] Tables 6, 7 and 8 in the Appendix 1.

who has done all of these following activities. Please select the three activities that you think helped the most his/her development". It was structured as a multiple-choice question, with the same selectable activities already present in the Question 3.

Overall, the most selected answer was exchange programs, selected by 122 respondents, followed by foreign languages, with 120 answers, and Sports, with 78; volunteering was selected 74 times; all the other activities were selected less than 40 times (see Appendix 3, table 1). When looking at the single nationalities, the most selected answer by the Italian and Portuguese groups was foreign languages (40 and 60 answers), while Indian respondents overall expressed a preference for exchange programs, with 30 answers.

The purpose of this question was to see how much importance students from different nationalities gave to these extracurricular activities, whether they performed them or not before University. For this reason, the question was analysed through the use of contingency tables; each variable was analysed separately, with nationality as a second variable.

The null hypothesis (H0) for this analysis was that there is no relationship between nationality and the preference for a particular extracurricular activity. To check for differences among nationalities, the tests used were: *Pearson's Chi-Squared*, *Likelihood Relationship* and *Linear by Linear Association*; like in the previous question, a significance level of 10% was applied in order to accept or reject H0.

The three tests together showed a significance level lower than 10% in the cases of music, foreign languages, religious activities. In the other cases, H0 was accepted by the three tests, with respondents' answers appearing uniformly within the three nationalities.

Regarding the music variable, Italian and Indian respondents appeared to give it a higher importance than Portuguese ones; in both of these groups, about 30% of the respondents selected the activity, against the expected of 22,5%. For foreign languages, the expected value

was of 75%; it was selected respectively by 81% and 87% of the Portuguese and Italians, while only 50% of the Indians seemed to consider it relevant.

Religious activities overall was the least selected activity, with only 24 total answers (5% of the total). Of them, 12 were from Indian nationality, 4 were Italians and 8 Portuguese. The results of the tests show that some Indian students may be more induced to consider religious activities as important; however, this information may be due to the smallness of the sample, than depending on an actual nationality difference.

Limitations

This study presents several limitations. First of all, the number of respondents is very low, even if every nationality group is high enough to assume normality (according to the central limit theorem). Secondly, almost every respondent from India came from only one University, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC); respondents from Italy and Portugal also were mostly from a restricted number of colleges (Italian students coming mostly from Bocconi and LUISS, Portuguese ones from NOVA and Catòlica). For this reason, the data gathered may not be representative of all Business graduates from the selected countries. The variable *Level of education of the highest-income parent* had a particular problem: most of our respondents (122 answers, 76% of the total) came from a cultured family, where at least a parent had a Master or a PhD.

The Anova is also biased because of the normality of the variables: the "Kolmogorov-Smirnov" and "Shapiro-Wilk" tests rejected the hypothesis of normality of the residuals for most of the variables. Because of this, the randomness of the sample is not proved and the Anova tests show a minor robustness.

The study only analyses how respondents think the performed activities were important, but does not analyse the amount of time and effort they dedicated to any specific activity, or when they started it (for example, in middle or high school).

A future research should try to target a higher number of students, if necessary by enlarging the target population not to include only graduates from the years 2013 and 2014. It should also focus on differences between graduates coming from high and low educated families, possibly including a higher number of universities to be analysed for each country, and check for differences in the participation rates.

Conclusions

Focus Group

The analysis of the focus group results shows similarities and differences between the three nationality groups, that needed a subsequent verification in the Quantitative Analysis. The Indian respondents were more likely to be raised form a poor household: this affected their possibility to participate for a longer time in leisure activities, to focus mainly on their studies. For the same reason, they decided not to lose time by participating in prosocial activities, at least during high school. At the same time, Indians seem to give a higher importance to these activities than the two other groups for the child and adolescent development.

Italian respondents, on average, came from well-being households and had the possibility to try more activities; this may be a reason why some of them seem to take them for granted, and most of them don't seem to give much importance to leisure activities such as music and sports, except for their personal interest. However, when performed, prosocial and political activities seem to be more important for them, for the development of soft skills. Finally, Portuguese respondents show some similarities with the Italian group; they tend to come from

richer households than the Indian group and while growing were exposed to many experiences.

Questionnaire

Not all of the hypotheses formulated after analysing the focus group results could be confirmed or rejected; some of them remain uncertain, because the tests did not prove to be significant enough. This is the case of sports, for which differences in nationality or parents' education seem irrelevant; tests regarding music activities equally presents no significance regarding nationality or gender. For this reason, it was not possible to analyse how these leisure activities are perceived in different groups.

Discrepancies across the three nationalities could be explained with different types of cultures and school education: a characteristic of these cases, is that preferences from Italians and Portuguese appear to behave in similar ways, and separately from people from India. For example, studying different languages is more importantly considered by people from Italy and Portugal, in which the majority of students only know the native one and English, than it is in India. The remaining activities are all possibly constructive, but also time-consuming, extracurricular activities; again, people from Italy and Portugal express a similar preference, which is higher than the Indian one. This is coherent with what emerged from the focus groups, in which Indian education gave more importance to studying and grades than other activities, although the focus group participants were almost a decade older.

Regarding gender, only two variables show a significance, sports and volunteering, with male respondents showing a preference for sports and females for volunteering.

The differences among respondents with different parental backgrounds show that a higher interest to any of extracurricular activity from the ones coming from a more cultured family, than the ones with parents without university education. This is true for all the tests where significance was proven: sports, music, foreign languages and exchange programs. This may

imply that more educated parents themselves produce, on their offspring, more interest in different Extracurricular Activities, or that kids in high-level families are exposed to a higher range of stimuli. Regarding the projective technique, the most meaningful significance is probably the one regarding foreign languages, that once again shows how Portuguese and Italian people consider it valuable The two remaining variables, music and religious activities, although significant, have to be considered separately, as already told in the Limitations chapter, because of the low number of total responses.

Education in Italy and Portugal, as well probably in the other western countries, seems more oriented toward out-of-school activities and different experiences, when compared with eastern ones. However, alumni from business schools seem to more importantly consider the participation in more structured instructional activities, such as studying foreign languages, or helping the community.

All this suggests that alumni with a strong background in these activities may have an advantage to their colleagues: young students who want to start a career in business should focus on these activities that can help them make new experiences and interact with others. These suggestions are valid also for students in oriental countries such as India, if they want to pursue an international career and be at the same level as their colleagues from around the world.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire Analysis – ANOVA – Tables

Table 1: ANOVA – Gender and Extracurricular Activities – Levene's Test for Homoscedasticity

	Levene's Statistic	gl1	gl2	Sign.
Sports	1,507	1	146	,221
Music	1,451	1	134	,230
Foreign Languages	,093	1	154	,761
Volunteering	,861	1	134	,355
Exchange Programs	,479	1	114	,490
Summer School	,023	1	90	,880
Religious Activities	,802	1	114	,372

Table 2: ANOVA – Gender and Extracurricular Activities

		Somma dei quadrati	gl	Media quadratica	F	Sign.
Sports	Between Groups	35,130	1	35,130	6,960	,009
	Within Groups	736,870	146	5,047		
	Total	772,000	147			
Music	Tra gruppi	2,675	1	2,675	,504	,479
	Entro i gruppi	710,825	134	5,305		
	Totale	713,500	135			
Foreign Languages	Tra gruppi	,259	1	,259	,064	,801
	Entro i gruppi	624,484	154	4,055		
	Totale	624,744	155			
Volunteering	Tra gruppi	25,327	1	25,327	5,992	,016
	Entro i gruppi	566,438	134	4,227		
	Totale	591,765	135			
Exchange Programs	Tra gruppi	13,793	1	13,793	2,480	,118
	Entro i gruppi	634,069	114	5,562		
	Totale	647,862	115			
Summer School	Tra gruppi	17,220	1	17,220	2,257	,136
	Entro i gruppi	686,606	90	7,629		
	Totale	703,826	91			
Religious Activities	Tra gruppi	20,364	1	20,364	2,577	,111
	Entro i gruppi	900,878	114	7,902		
	Totale	921,241	115			

Table 3: ANOVA - Level of education of the highest income parent – Levene's Test for Homoscedasticity

	Levene's Statistic	gl1	gl2	Sign.
Sports	2,514	2	145	,084

Music	,853	2	133	,428
Foreign Languages	8,611	2	153	,000
Volunteering	3,706	2	133	,027
Exchange Programs	3,099	2	113	,049
Summer School	,542	2	89	,583
Religious Activities	,743	2	113	,478

Table 4: ANOVA – Level of education of the highest income parent

		Somma dei quadrati	gl	Media quadratica	F	Sign.
Music	Tra gruppi	51,928	2	25,964	5,220	,007
	Entro i gruppi	661,572	133	4,974		
	Totale	713,500	135			
Summer School	Tra gruppi	19,642	2	9,821	1,278	,284
	Entro i gruppi	684,184	89	7,687		
	Totale	703,826	91			
Religious Activities	Tra gruppi	18,376	2	9,188	1,150	,320
	Entro i gruppi	902,866	113	7,990		
	Totale	921,241	115			

Table 5: Robust tests for equality of means – Level of education of the highest income parent

		Statistica	gl1	gl2	Sign.
Sports	Welch	3,595	2	27,246	,041
	Brown-Forsythe	3,372	2	45,619	,043
Foreign Languages	Welch	10,297	2	32,644	,000
	Brown-Forsythe	8,744	2	56,949	,000
Volunteering	Welch	2,111	2	30,572	,138
	Brown-Forsythe	1,901	2	52,792	,159
Exchange Programs	Welch	1,978	2	20,317	,164
	Brown-Forsythe	2,343	2	16,449	,127

Table 6: ANOVA – Nationality – Levene's test for homoscedasticity

	Statistica di Levene	gl1	gl2	Sign.
Sports	1,254	2	145	,288
Music	3,663	2	133	,028
Foreign Languages	16,939	2	153	,000
Volunteering	,976	2	133	,379
Exchange Programs	9,652	2	113	,000

Summer School	4,873	2	89	,010
Religious Activities	,071	2	113	,931

Table 7: ANOVA - Nationality

		Somma dei quadrati	gl	Media quadratica	F	Sign.
Sports	Tra gruppi	19,912	2	9,956	1,919	,150
	Entro i gruppi	752,088	145	5,187		
	Totale	772,000	147			
Volunteering	Tra gruppi	63,590	2	31,795	8,006	,001
	Entro i gruppi	528,175	133	3,971		
	Totale	591,765	135			
Religious Activities	Tra gruppi	6,125	2	3,062	,378	,686
	Entro i gruppi	915,117	113	8,098		
	Totale	921,241	115			

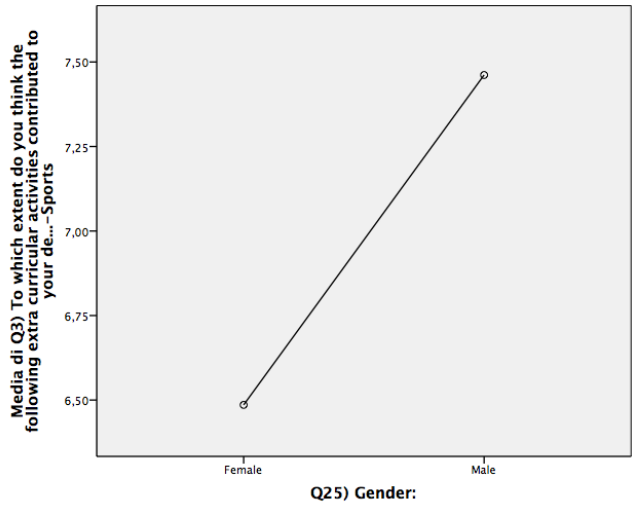
Table 8: Robust tests for equality of means – Nationality

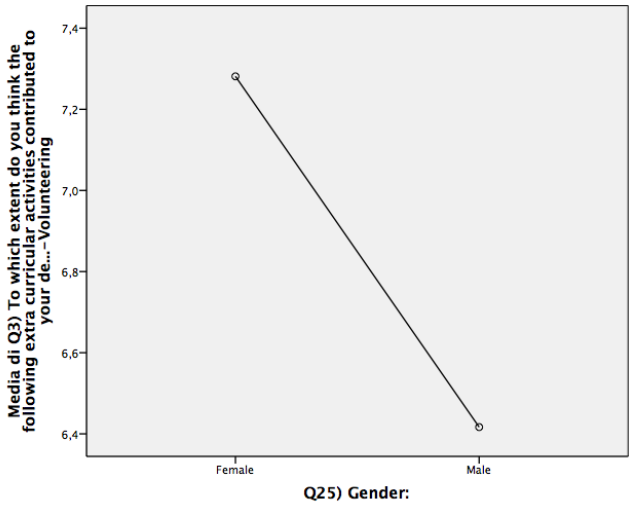
		Statistica	gl1	gl2	Sign.
Music	Welch	1,737	2	86,981	,182
	Brown-Forsythe	1,816	2	127,622	,167
Foreign Languages	Welch	41,932	2	74,063	,000
	Brown-Forsythe	54,736	2	88,905	,000
Exchange Programs	Welch	19,369	2	45,464	,000
	Brown-Forsythe	10,780	2	84,890	,000
Summer School	Welch	9,970	2	59,326	,000
	Brown-Forsythe	8,116	2	84,731	,001

Appendix 2: Questionnaire analysis – ANOVA – Mean graphs[8]

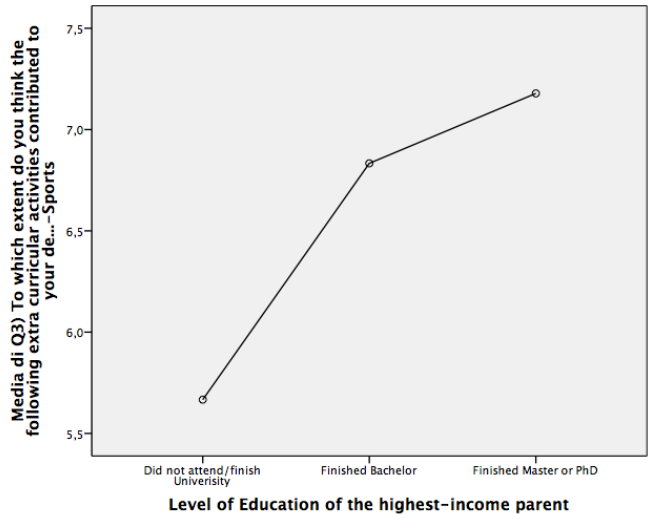
Graph 1: Gender and Extracurricular Activities (sports, volunteering)

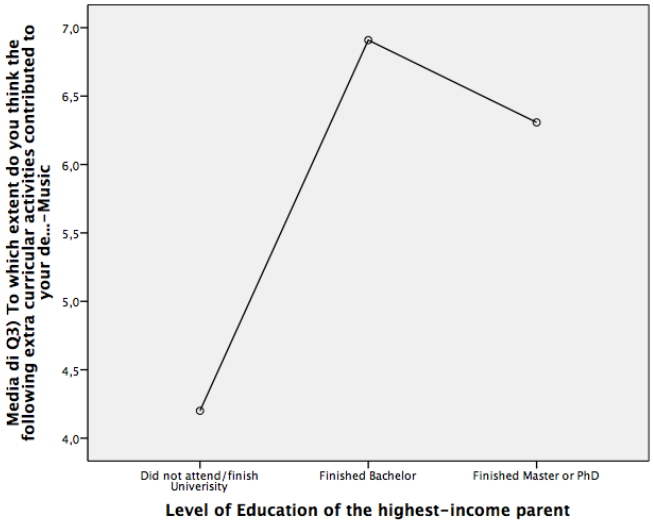
[8] The graphs in this appendix only show the variables in which a significant relationship was found

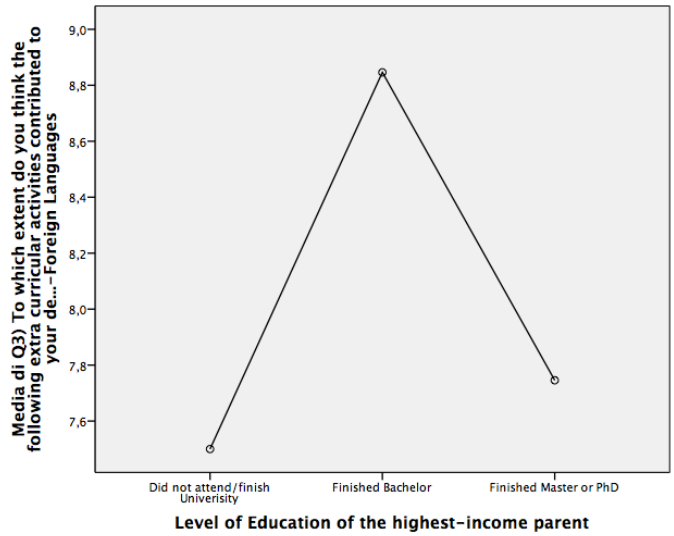




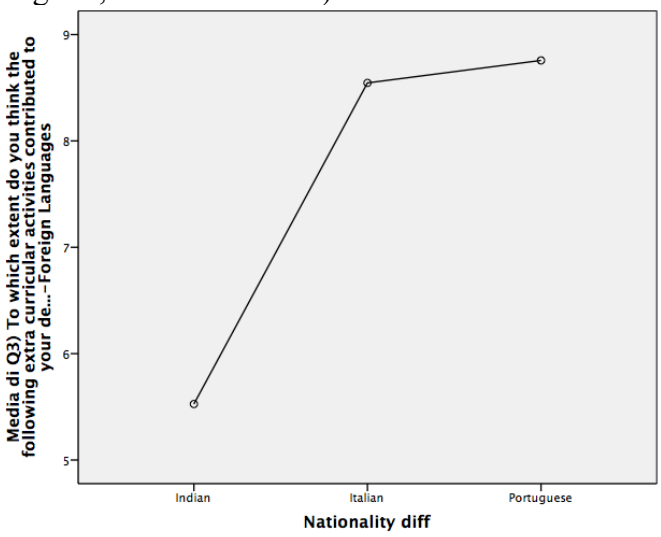
Graph 2: Level of education of the highest income parent and extracurricular activities (sports, music, foreign languages)

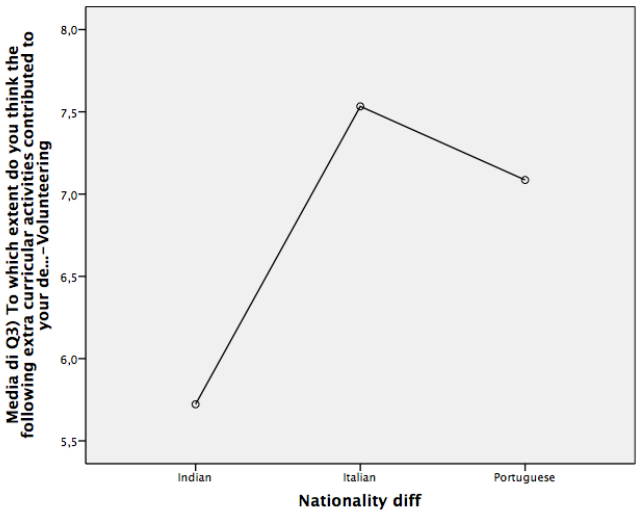


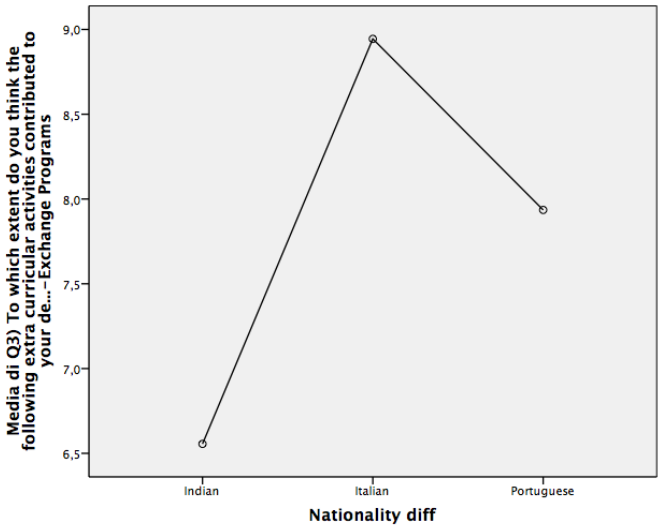


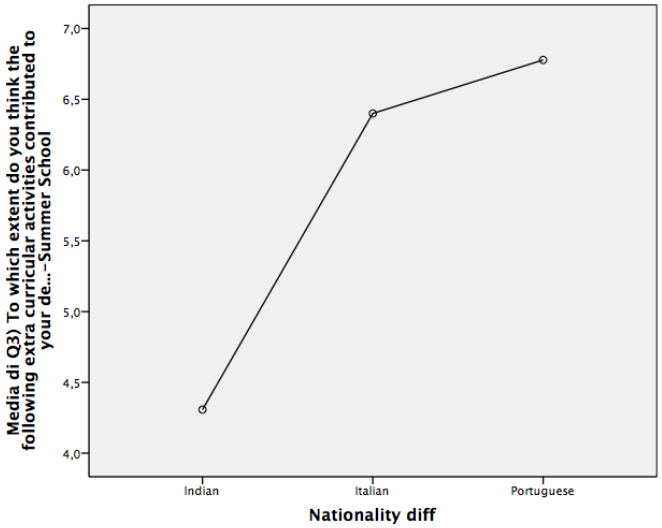


Graph 3: Nationality and extracurricular activities (foreign languages, volunteering, exchange program, summer schools)









Appendix 3: Questionnaire Analysis – Contingency tables[9]

Table 1: Summary table

			Nationality diff			Totale
			Indian	Italian	Portuguese	
Please select the three most important	Sports	Conteggio	18	24	36	78
		% del totale	3,8%	5,0%	7,5%	16,3%
	Music	Conteggio	12	14	10	36
		% del totale	2,5%	2,9%	2,1%	7,5%
	Foreign Languages	Conteggio	20	40	60	120
		% del totale	4,2%	8,3%	12,5%	25,0%
	Volunteering	Conteggio	22	18	34	74
		% del totale	4,6%	3,8%	7,1%	15,4%
	Exchange Programs	Conteggio	30	34	58	122
		% del totale	6,3%	7,1%	12,1%	25,4%

[9] Only the contingency tables where the tests proved a significant correlation are shown.

	Summer School	Conteggio	6	4	16	26
		% del totale	1,3%	0,8%	3,3%	5,4%
	Religious Activities	Conteggio	12	4	8	24
		% del totale	2,5%	0,8%	1,7%	5,0%
Totale		Conteggio	120	138	222	480
		% del totale	25,0%	28,8%	46,3%	100,0%

Table 2: Music

			Music		
			0	1	Totale
Nationality diff	Indian	Conteggio	28	12	40
		Conteggio previsto	31,0	9,0	40,0
	Italian	Conteggio	32	14	46
		Conteggio previsto	35,7	10,4	46,0
	Portuguese	Conteggio	64	10	74
		Conteggio previsto	57,4	16,7	74,0
Totale		Conteggio	124	36	160
		Conteggio previsto	124,0	36,0	160,0

Table 3: Foreign Languages

			Foreign Languages		
			0	1	Totale
Nationality diff	Indian	Conteggio	20	20	40
		Conteggio previsto	10,0	30,0	40,0
	Italian	Conteggio	6	40	46
		Conteggio previsto	11,5	34,5	46,0
	Portuguese	Conteggio	14	60	74
		Conteggio previsto	18,5	55,5	74,0
Totale		Conteggio	40	120	160
		Conteggio previsto	40,0	120,0	160,0

Table 4: Religious Activities

			Religious Activities		
			0	1	Totale
Nationality diff	Indian	Conteggio	28	12	40
		Conteggio previsto	34,0	6,0	40,0
	Italian	Conteggio	42	4	46
		Conteggio previsto	39,1	6,9	46,0
	Portuguese	Conteggio	66	8	74
		Conteggio previsto	62,9	11,1	74,0
Totale		Conteggio	136	24	160
		Conteggio previsto	136,0	24,0	160,0

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