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Drama As a Pedagogical Tool: An Assessment of Dramatic Clubs in Universities

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ABSTRACT

Drama is one of the most prominent co-curricular activities in universities, serving as a powerful learning tool for students involved in dramatic clubs. This study employs a qualitative analysis framed within the social cognitive theory to address key research questions: How does drama foster emotional understanding among students? How does it contribute to mental well-being? What is its impact on physical improvement? And how does collaboration within drama clubs enhance social relationships? Data were collected through in-depth interviews with active drama club participants. The findings reveal that participation in university drama clubs significantly contributes to students' psychological growth, mental health, physical development, and social cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

Drama reflects societal issues and serves as a medium to identify and address social problems. As a visual representation of concepts, drama combines elements of art and literature to engage and inspire audiences (Betti, 2020). In Pakistan, drama faced a decline in the late 2000s due to commercialization, loss of artistic integrity, and the rise of obscenity. These factors led families to distance themselves from theatrical activities.

In recent years, however, drama has experienced a revival among Pakistan's youth. University students have played a pivotal role in this resurgence, organizing drama festivals and competitions that integrate art into modern pedagogical practices. Pedagogy, defined as the art of teaching through behaviours, practices, and culture (Shah, 2020), has found new applications through drama. Recognizing this, many



universities in Pakistan now allocate substantial budgets to support dramatic clubs and promote extracurricular engagement.

Several prominent universities, including GC University, Agriculture University (UAF), the University of Central Punjab (UCP), and FAST-NU Faisalabad, maintain active drama societies. These clubs contribute to students' holistic development by fostering emotional intelligence, physical fitness, and social skills. The following research explores how drama serves as a pedagogical tool in these universities.

Background of Drama

Aristotle explains drama as “mimesis” which means “an imitation of action” (Aristotle, 1961). According to Abrahams (1981), drama is a prologue to Theater. The main goal of writing a play is to have it performed on a stage rather than read. To clear this point, in 1960 Wole Soyinka says in her play, “A Dance of the Forests” that as a playwright, my main responsibility is to deliver top-notch theater and to put it another way, I believe my only duty to the public is to ensure that my audience is not bored when they leave the theater (Nkosi 1972).

UNESCO reported in 2004 that extracurricular activities as those activities which don't comprise curriculum. It cover music, drama, fine arts, debate, physical activities and literary clubs. These engagements assist students to thrive their expertise in their life. Unterschutz (2016) expressed that In USA, Yale and Harvard University were the first institutes who initiated the co-curricular activities in 1753. The students of these institutes participated in various activities. The performing arts, academic enhancement, sports, leadership and social development and recreational activities were most esteemed clubs there. Initially, few students took a part in this venture but eventually numerous students showed interest in different clubs. Around 70% participation in extracurricular activities by the students were recorded in few years. It became a mandatory need of the youngsters and universities spent \$250 Million on these activities yearly. The majority of the students were involved in the athletics. Performing Art was the second most appealing activities for the youngsters who influenced by the Willian Shakespeare. Students used to copy and recreate the stories and dialogues of Shakespeare. Drama always the symbol of resistance and change in the society, and becomes famous among students. The nature of drama is sensational which increase the significance of the issues in society that will not affect anyone, and the message also delivered. Ustündag (1997) highlighted the importance of the dramatic performances which had the meaningful results. The drama change the attitude of the students and Universities provide them the opportunities to enhance the social experiences. Most studies have discovered that institutions arrange the financial support for their students. The presence of thousands of Performing arts colleges in London and Paris proved over the years that for participants, drama and theater is the door to self-discovery, creativity, and self-expression. Whereas, a very beneficial tool to audience for civic education (ICMT, 2016). Similar to its role in ancient Greece civilization. However, Aristotle demonstrates the educational value of drama in his masterpiece “Poetics” phenomenally (1961). Furthermore, a study from a National Institute of Mental Health proves that children who participate in creative activities like music and theater can grow emotional resilience and leadership qualities easily by gaining confidence, translating their ideas, and finding a healthy way to release stress (TheatertrainHQ, 2024).

Background of the Study

Higher Education Commission reported that GC University Faisalabad is one of the prestigious institutes in Pakistan. (HEC), 2021). It offers a range of higher educational programs with almost 36000 enrolled students. University allows students to engage in curricular as well as extracurricular activities under the supervision of Directorate of Students Affair. There are twenty seven societies already participating in all aspects. Dramatic and Performing Arts Society (DPAS) is the finest performing club in country who has won several awards and competitions in Pakistan. The journey of DPAS was started in 2011 with few students, now more than two hundred students are affiliated with club. The students have travelled different cities and explored the theatrical experiences. They always create and develop new ideas for drama productions such as Bhulekha, Moorat, Aladdin Haftam and Bhookk. DPAS has won countless



awards in several categories. The stories of drama based on social issues, Bhulekha depicts the corruption of our society, Moorat states the difficulties of a woman, Aladdin reflects the story of the poor and their desire and Bhookk hits the life challenges of a common man. GCU Faisalabad spends 1,000,000 PKR on DPAS annually. (N. Sohail, personal communication, September 5, 2025).

University of Central Punjab (UCP) was started its operations in 2014 at Faisalabad with two major departments including business and science. The institute is popular for its educational excellence and sports development program that produces extra ordinary sportsman and performers to the country. University focused on co-curricular activities and social clubs to accelerate the student's physical and mental health. It also initiated many societies for the augmentation of the students and helped out to organize mega events, Qawali and Sufi nights. The students joined the platforms to brighten their talent. Furthermore, 200 students were part of the society. Arts and literature club had some notable productions, Rang e Haqiqat shaped the Sufism and the creation of human, Tum Jo Ik Orat Ho presented the issues of women, Baba Loka dealt with the relationship of Allah and human beings. All these productions praised and conquered in everywhere. UCP invest a huge amount in these activities. (K. Khan, personal communication, September 10th, 2025).

Agriculture University Faisalabad has the credit to becoming the largest university in South Asia region with almost 2550 acre land. It was established in 1906 as a research institute and converted to university in 1961, and ranked top notch university in Pakistan which deals in agricultural and veterinary disciplines. A lot of students get enrolled and pass out regularly. Many societies and clubs are running under the umbrella of Directorate of Students Affair that imparts the equal chances to provoke the skills and abilities. The Art Club, Qirat & Naat Club, Quiz Club, Society of Agricultural Writers, Virsa Music Society and UAF Media Club are the busiest clubs there. Agriculture University is credited to initiate the diverse events in the history of Faisalabad. (H. Sadiq, personal communication, August 24th, 2025). The Art Club is the oldest dramatic club in Faisalabad hosted the first ever intervarsity dramatic competition in Faisalabad. It arranged many theatre workshops and trainings for the theatre lovers, and mostly the students of Agriculture University were active members of the club. The Art Club has excessive achievements in dramatic circuit nationally. Diva Mundri Da, Chotta, Talasmati Tota, Global Village, Ik Raat Ravi Di and Jaloos are the remarkable productions. Diva Mundri Da explicit the dreams and aspirations of the struggling class, Chotta is the story of a boy who is the waiter in a small hotel and wants to be an actor, Talasmati Tota is the master piece of Ajoka Theatre based on who has the influence over the people, Global Village reveals the power of technology and communication, Ik Raat Ravi Di is about the resilience of Ahmad Khan Kharral who battled against the British in Punjab, and Jaloos is the iconic play of Bangali writer Badal Sarkar who criticized the role of establishment in politics. (B. Khaliq, personal communication, August 24th, 2025).

The Fast University (Chiniot Campus) is the leading educational institute with five campuses across the country. It was established in 2012 with four disciplines including Engineering, Computer, Management and Humanities. Dramocrats is performing art society in the university started in 2013 by few students. The success of the society is like a flower growing into a vase. The members of the society are more than hundred. Dramocrat is arranged intervarsity theatre festival (Daira) in March annually and invite the senior actors of the industry as judge. Several productions have staged by the students. Jarray Ki Dastan and Tehlil are noteworthy plays of Democrats. Jarray Ki Dastan is a modification of Willian Shakespeare based on societal concerns and challenges, Tehlil is unveiling the women issues. Fast University focuses on the extracurricular activities for the advancement of the students.

Research Questions

1. How does drama foster emotional understanding among students?
2. How does drama contribute to mental well-being?
3. What is the impact of drama on students' physical development?
4. How does collaboration within drama clubs enhance social relationships?



Aims and Objectives

The study aims to evaluate the impact of drama as a pedagogical tool in universities and examine how it fosters emotional, mental, physical, and social development among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drama is acknowledged as an extensive combination of artistic and educational methodology. It strongly affects students; perceptions and the blending of multiple expressive tones are significantly impacted, allowing individuals to acquire more proficiency and competence and expand their abilities to look across limitations. (Teruel, Alfonso-Benlliure, and Field, 2018)

Drama is the primary medium that promote diverse cultures and languages. A research in 2022 supports this viewpoint by suggesting that performing arts provides the audience with the opportunity to observe their colleagues' practices and learn their values, also helps promote various dialects across cultures (Sandis, 2022). Coming to Pedagogy, Fiensen & Sen (2022) described it as the art of delivering something in an appropriate direction. Over the years, drama have seen as a form of artistic education that strengthen social ties and indicate the problems of society in a non-triggering manner. Furthermore, the development of bonding between the participants of dramatic societies led them to acquire skills of social responsibility, which eventually helped them in their personal development (Strejčková, 2021).

Drama is an essential part of a student's education. It enhances confidence and cultivates a pleasant disposition. Students must focus on their emotions and physical wellbeing, manage the stress and comprehend the feelings. (Bhise, 2017)

It is observed that acting improves the psychological well-being and highlighted the qualities by the participants such as self-consciousness, mental relationship, fearlessness, individuality and lowering anxiety. In addition to the beneficial impacts of performing arts, the participants mentioned some bad impression by the people. (Radic & Hren, 2022). The effect of drama on students' lives has been the subject of numerous studies. Idogho and Osuya (2020) demonstrated that engaging in performing arts activities helps students' mental processes to develop their emotional decision-making, including those related to anger, grief, happiness, joy, and love.

Another style of art and literature doesn't substantially affect viewers, but drama can capture the audience's interaction in a prismatic move. Oztug & Cine (2017) stated that students learn from different social institutions and follow them frequently. It is used to change the audience's mind and recast the existence of social issues.

Drama has a significant role in the cultural diversity. It seems to be like a advocate of culture and society. It promotes multiculturalism by showcasing other languages, customs, traditions, and lifestyles. Students utilized to comprehend the psychological behavior and point of view of others. Each member of the theatrical club participates in various activities, which boosts their confidence and motivation.

All these researches point out the positive impact of drama, but there is a gap between them. Most studies are done on schoolchildren and adolescents, but university students who are more mature than children still need to be included.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study follows the methodology outlined by Mishra and Alok (2017) and Cropley (2023), which emphasizes real-life observations and personal experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted with drama club members from 4 universities in Faisalabad. Participants were chosen based on their dedication and passion. Open-ended questions were used to explore emotional, psychological, and physical impacts, as well as the role of collaboration in social relationships.

Part of the Objective
Interview

Questions



Introduction to the interview	Find out the demographics, basic information, and the responsibilities and active role of the research participants in the drama club.	Tell Us about your name, age, university, and course etc. Why did you decide to join the drama club? How long have you been in the theatre?
Central part of the interview	Learn how the student's everyday life has been impacted by and is being influenced by their time working in the dramatic arts?	How does drama affect emotional intelligence? Does drama explore your self-consciousness? How does drama activities influence psychological wellbeing? Do you involve in real characters or situations to improve your own personality? Is drama outstanding source for physical health? Do warm up activities in drama keep the body energized? Do vocal practices improve the quality of communication? Is drama a way to improve your social relationship? Have you discovered any cultural or language change through drama?
End of Interview	Determine whether the participant has something additional to say that has yet to be discussed during the interview.	Is there anything we still need to talk about that you would like to add or highlight?

Reviewed: Participants were chosen based on their dedication and passion and passion for dramatic arts.
Added: 80 participants were chosen based on their dedication and passion and passion for dramatic arts using Purposive sampling.

The flowchart of Drama as a pedagogical tool



Operational Definitions of Variables:**Mental Wellbeing:**

A research carried out which explain the mental wellbeing as satisfaction of life, happiness, low anxiety and helpful of a human being. The absence of mental disease or mental illness. Good mental health improves quality of life and allows for social participation and inclusion for people (Baldwin et al. 2021). Mental well-being refers to the mental condition of students, which enables understanding of the mental level, their individual perceptions and mental health. All psychological aspects are covered in this study which focuses on developing the learner's mind and thinking process. What do they assume from drama, and how do they behave with others?

Emotional Understanding:

Some psychologists have suggested the pure definition of emotions. An emotion is a temporary or continual mental disturbance induced by a mismatch between reality and wishes. Emotions are a result of interconnected mental and behavioural factors. It can be changed stimulus according to the circumstances (Michel, 2002). The study assumes the emotional integration of the students and how drama modifies their feelings and sentiments. It prescribes the momentum of emotions, which could be changed according to the characters. When a student prepares a character, he overviews all aspects of the character, including life incidents, happy moments, worst situations and challenges.

Physical Development:

Physical development refers to the growth and changes in a person's body. The most visible changes are those in body shape and size. Meanwhile, motor development is the gradual development of a person's ability to perform various movements due to the interaction of maturity factors and training or experience during life (Susilowati & Suwarjo). This study is passionate about identifying the students' physical development and strength after participating in drama activities. Numerous drama exercises, including body balancing, voice practices, facial expressions, and collaborative exercises, boost the body muscles.

Social Relationships:

Relationships are continuing patterns of contact between two individuals who acknowledge a connection with each other. Parents, friends, and teachers are the most common social partners with which people engage. (Rubin & McDonald, 2018). This study discusses the social relationships of students who participated in drama. How does drama engage them with their colleagues who come from different backgrounds? It helps to connect students with other religions, languages, cultures, values and customs.

Theoretical Framework:

Social Cognitive Theory was used as a reference to support this study as it describes how individuals learn from observation and how that learnings influence their behaviour. Bandura (1989) says that people learn everything through inspection and environment. Moreover, imitation is also a key aspect of observational learning. If it relates to theatre practices, people imitate the behaviour displayed on stage by observing the play, according to the SCT, and actors empathize by using their emotional memory to understand their characters.

FINDINGS**Emotional Understanding**

Drama enhances emotional intelligence by immersing students in diverse characters and scenarios. Students reported a heightened ability to empathize and manage their emotions. Teruel, Alfonso-Benlliure, and Field (2018) emphasize that drama fosters emotional awareness, while Lane and Smith (2021) highlight its role in developing emotional intelligence through sensory and cognitive integration.

Mental Well-being

Drama positively impacts students' mental health by offering creative outlets for stress relief. It fosters self-confidence, resilience, and psychological flexibility. Gul and Caglayan (2017) and Orkibi et al. (2023)

affirm that drama expands cognitive and emotional capacities, contributing to mental alertness and overall well-being.

Physical Development

Drama activities improve physical health by promoting body awareness, coordination, and stamina. Regular theatrical exercises enhance respiratory function, posture, and physical endurance (Arias, 2019; Koksal, 2020). Participants noted improvements in their physical strength and stage presence.

Social Relationships

Drama fosters collaboration, cultural exchange, and social awareness. Students reported stronger interpersonal skills and a deeper appreciation for diversity. Oztug and Cine (2017) and Batdi and Elaldi (2020) highlight drama's capacity to build social cohesion and address societal issues.

Comparative Analysis:

Emotional Development

➤ **Emotional Understanding**

- Drama increases emotional intelligence by engaging students in miscellaneous characters and scenarios. Students said they were better able to empathize and manage their emotions. Moreover, acknowledged that their emotional state and behavior were considerably swayed by participating in theater.
- Drama helped members comprehend the emotions, behaviors, and ideas of others. Additionally, every respondent point out that drama had the potential to transform attitudes and mental states, fostering empathy and understanding.
- Respondents documented that drama inflated intense feelings and improved their awareness of mood swings and management of emotions.

➤ **Self-Awareness and Confidence**

- Drama enhanced self-awareness and increased self-control which helped respondents' ability to understand other people's problems and they can easily avoid hurting other individuals' feelings.

Mental Development

➤ **Cognitive Growth**

- Respondents stated that their cognitive capacities had significantly improved. They saw an increased capacity for situational analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- All respondents reported that drama enhanced their problem-solving skills and improved their level of thinking, indicating a profound mental shift brought about by their involvement in performing arts

➤ **Intellectual and Creative Expansion**

- Drama helped participants learn unexpected things by offering fresh educational opportunities that went beyond conventional schooling. Many respondents said that dramatic exercises helped them develop their critical and creative thinking skills, and some even credited their participation with helping them grow personally.

Physical Development

➤ **Physical Health Benefits**

- Drama was shown as beneficial for physical health by increasing stamina, coordination, and body awareness. However, a few respondents, disagreed with this point of view.

➤ **Importance of Physical Exercises**

- Numerous responders stressed the importance of warm-up exercises, such as facial, voice, and balancing exercises, in enhancing both general health and physical performance. They agreed that it improved their ability to regulate their bodies and prepare for stage appearances. While some respondents questioned the need for physical activity.

- Facial exercises were thought to improve expressions and emotional delivery, while vocal exercises were thought to be essential for enhancing voice quality and stage projection. But according to some responders, these activities weren't necessary for their voice or facial control.

Social Development

➤ Social Interaction and Networking

- Drama encouraged networking and socialization. In order to strengthen their social relationships, respondents regularly met people from other colleges and shared tales, challenges, and experiences. Participants felt that theater offered them special chances to engage with others and foster relationships outside of their own personal social circle.

➤ Teamwork and Collaboration

- Respondents emphasized the value of collaboration in drama, with staff, directors, writers, and performers working together and making concessions to guarantee a good production.

➤ Cultural Awareness and Exchange

- Respondents expressed appreciation for cultural diversity across Pakistan and acknowledged drama to help them travel, explore, and understand various traditions, customs, and societal challenges. Hence, it served as a medium for cross-cultural communication by shedding light on other people's customs, languages, and ways of life.

➤ Language Skills

- As they engaged with classmates from other parts of Pakistan, drama aided respondents in learning and appreciating other languages. The majority of respondents said they were interested in learning new languages to impress people and enhance communication, while some prioritized their native language.

➤ Cultural and Traditional Sharing

- Drama encouraged intercultural communication and comprehension. As respondents introduced friends from a variety of backgrounds to their traditions and cuisine, including saag roti, chicken pulao, and sajji that help people from different backgrounds to socialize with each other.

DISCUSSION

Drama emerges as a powerful pedagogical tool, fostering holistic development among university students. It enhances emotional intelligence, relieves mental stress, promotes physical fitness, and strengthens social bonds. The study underscores the significance of integrating performing arts into educational curricula to nurture creativity, cultural awareness, and interpersonal skills.

Drama also bridges gaps between tradition and modernity, offering a platform for students to explore socio-political narratives in a constructive manner. By reshaping societal realities through storytelling, drama equips students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The current study emphasizes on the importance of drama in a sophisticated approach where it captivates the entertainment as well as infotainment, and also derives the individuality, affectation and strength to the students. Former researches distinguishes the influence of drama as a progressive tool in the life of young performers. It recognizes the dynamic potential and competency which nurtures the future of the young performers. Drama is the noteworthy and counsellor to take challenges and opportunities in their careers. It is necessary to examine the effects of emotional intelligence, the learning process of the students has started after participating in different theatrical activities. Mostly drama hits aggressively to the mental level that boost the wellbeing, confidence and socio-political experiences of the students. Drama also welcomes the creative individuals who originates the idea from fiction to reality. This study confronts the social cognitive theory due the socio-personal experiences, attributions and perceptions of the society. It carries the exceptional study of human beings that covers the perceptions and behaviours. Drama recommends the regular physical activities to cultivate the activeness of body. It also underline the

importance of the health in performing arts. The performer will easily move and act on the stage with good health. Mostly, drama workshops determine the health exercises including voice practices, body balancing, muscles relaxation and movements. The last few questions stamped out that the drama is a bridging tool between cultural and religion diversity. The people come together at a same place under these activities. After the ruination of the theatre in Pakistan, youth is the last hope to revival of the stage. The new generation take drama seriously as the tool to move forward in their life. Universities are trying to set the merits of theatre for young audience and also plays a vital role for reformation of theatre and it should be obligatory for everyone to take a part in these programs. It is necessary to arrange multiple theatrical events in educational institutes with the help of local and federal governments in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms the transformative potential of drama as a pedagogical tool in universities. By fostering emotional, mental, physical, and social growth, drama prepares students for personal and professional challenges. Universities in Pakistan play a pivotal role in reviving this art form, promoting cultural values, and enriching students' educational experiences.

Recommendations

1. **Integration into Curriculum:** Incorporate performing arts as a mandatory component of educational programs to enhance students' holistic development.
2. **Broader Studies:** Conduct similar qualitative and quantitative studies across various universities to validate findings.
3. **Resource Allocation:** Ensure sufficient funding and resources for dramatic clubs to sustain their activities and outreach.
4. **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote the benefits of drama through workshops and seminars to encourage participation.

This research provides a foundation for future explorations of drama as an educational tool and its broader implications for society.

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