



Art, Music, and Sport: Catalysts of Growth for Adolescents in Extreme Contexts - A Qualitative Inquiry.

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33

34 ABSTRACT

35 Limited research has focused on the experiences of adolescents in extracurricular programs
36 and their potential to enhance their optimal development. Moreover, less studies examine the
37 participation in such programs for those developing in extreme conditions (i.e. extreme
38 poverty, sexual exploitation, refugee camps, conflicted areas, areas affected by climate
39 changes). This study focuses on the experience of youth living in the difficult context of
40 Southern Madagascar. The aims of this study are to explore and gain a better understanding of
41 the experience of adolescents engaging in extracurricular activities within this extreme context.
42 A total of 14 (N=14) semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants (M=7; F=7),
43 aged 15 to 19 years old, involved in extracurricular programs like art, music and sport, provided
44 by a local non-governmental organisation. Based on a thematic analysis, the results show that
45 this extracurricular program support the process of socialization of youth, personal growth,
46 and give a sense of protection. Such programs also support their psychological well-being and
47 their basic psychological needs in a challenging and insecure environment, and attempt to
48 bridge the gap in basic resources. Overall, these results offer interesting insights on the value
49 of these programs for youth living in extreme contexts of development.

50

51 Keywords

52 Youth, Extreme context, Madagascar, Extracurricular activities, Art, Sport

53 In this collaborative research project focusing on the experience of participation in
54 extracurricular activities (EA) for adolescents living in extreme conditions, youth from Southern
55 Madagascar involved in art, music and sport activities discussed their experience with our
56 research team. Through their narratives, they provided valuable insights on their participation
57 in these activities while navigating the challenging circumstances they face in their daily lives.
58

59 **1. INTRODUCTION**

60 Numerous programs are developed worldwide with the goal of optimizing adolescents'
61 development and promoting their well-being. Amongst these, extracurricular programs are
62 foreseen as a promising avenue (United Nations, 2010). Indeed, research has shown that the
63 participation in EA seems to have positive impacts on an array of outcomes like school well-
64 being and academic achievement (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006, 2008), lower
65 levels of depressive mood and anxiety (Larson et al., 2002), as well as lower levels of aggression,
66 antisocial behaviors, and crime (Rhodes & Spencer, 2005), or risky behaviors (Boelens et al.,
67 2022; Farb & Matjasko, 2012; Shulruf, 2010). Researchers have also shown that the satisfaction
68 of basic psychological needs (BPN) (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in an extracurricular activity context
69 seem to promote the need for competence and relatedness, and a more general well-being
70 among adolescents (Leversen et al., 2012).

71 However, few contexts, with more extreme developmental conditions and that
72 encompass the majority of the world youth population (Henrich et al., 2010), have been
73 studied. The concept of extreme context of development include a range of interconnected
74 factors that youth face, including malnutrition, arduous work, lack of freedom, limited access to
75 healthcare, insecurity, and scarcity of basic resources (Bettelheim, 1943).

76 Little is known about how youth participation in extracurricular programs support their
77 development in these specific conditions. As large and influential international organizations,
78 like the United Nations, intend to build on extracurricular programs to support youth growth
79 across the world (United Nations, 2010), it seems crucial to better understand how youth living
80 in these challenging conditions experience their implication in such programs.

81 To attain a more contextualised understanding, the present research is conducted in a
82 context that can be deemed extreme in terms of development, focusing on the Toliara region
83 in southwestern Madagascar. This area is known for being one of the most socioeconomically
84 challenged areas in the country. Adolescents from Toliara engaged in extracurricular program
85 shared their experience with our research team, shedding light on their participation in these
86 activities amidst the challenging conditions they face in their daily lives.
87

88 **1.1. *The extreme context of Madagascar***

89 In 2015, 193 United Nations Member States, including Madagascar, committed to
90 pursuing seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) until 2030. Halfway to 2030,
91 indicators of extreme context are still clearly present in Madagascar (Sachs et al., 2023).
92 Regarding the poverty level (SDG1 "No poverty"), 66.45% of the 29 million country population is
93 living under the poverty threshold of US\$2.15 a day in 2023 and nearly 80% survives on less

94 than US\$3.65 per day (Sachs et al., 2023). In the southern and western regions, including the
95 Toliara region, the proportion of poor children is particularly high, with 49.3% living in poverty
96 (Silva-Leander, 2020). Madagascar is recognized as one of the world's poorest countries,
97 ranking 173rd out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (United Nations
98 Development Program, 2022). The country's development progress falls behind many other
99 sub-Saharan African nations (World Bank, 2022). Frequent political crises impact the country's
100 economic development (World Bank, 2022).

101 The prevalence of extreme poverty notably affects crucial societal aspirations, like
102 fostering peace, justice, robust institutions (SDG16), and promoting decent work opportunities
103 alongside economic growth (SDG8). Indeed, children are frequently engaged in work to
104 supplement family income. In 2018, 37% of children aged between 5 and 14 years old were
105 involved in economic activity or, at least, in 28 hours per week of household chores (Sachs et
106 al., 2023). Children's work in Madagascar ranges from selling goods on the streets or to
107 tourists, to working in salt or sapphire mines, or even engaging in prostitution to support their
108 families or themselves (Brial, 2011). Poverty and child labor significantly impact school
109 enrollment (SDG4 "Quality education"). About 98% of Malagasy children enroll in primary
110 school, but only 35% complete lower secondary education (Sachs et al., 2023).

111 Regarding food insecurity (SDG2 "Zero hunger"), in 2022, nearly 40% of the country's
112 children up to the age of 5 years were stunted (Sachs et al., 2023). The challenges faced by
113 Malagasy population are complicated by climatic issues that are expected to increase in the
114 coming years due to climate change. Droughts recurrently affect the southern region,
115 threatening the population's food security (De Berry, 2023; UNICEF, 2014). In 2022, 20% of
116 children screened by Médecins Sans Frontières suffered from moderate/severe malnutrition
117 (Hoexter, 2023).

118 Major challenges remain regarding the population health and well-being (SDG3). Indeed,
119 plague and malaria have re-emerged, alongside ongoing challenges with tuberculosis and
120 measles due to insufficient vaccination coverage among children (UNICEF, 2014; United Nations
121 Population Fund, 2017). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has also severely impacted the
122 Malagasy population (World Bank, 2020). Life expectancy at birth is fairly low, with an
123 estimation at 64 years in 2021, compared to 83 years in Canada (World Bank, 2023). UNICEF
124 (2018) reported persistent inequalities in young women's access to health services due to
125 limited household resources and control over women's decisions, including the need for
126 permission to access reproductive health service from an elder member of the family. In 2020,
127 maternal mortality rate was 391.5 per 100 000 live births (Sachs et al., 2023) with teenage
128 pregnancies accounting for a third of maternal mortality cases (UNICEF, 2018). Early pregnancy
129 rates are high, with 15% of pregnancies occurring among young women aged 15 to 19 years
130 old in 2017 (Sachs et al., 2023). Limited sex education and a low contraceptive prevalence rate
131 of 33%, dropping to 5.6% in the southern region (United Nations Population Fund, 2017),
132 heighten vulnerability among girls and women.

133 In 2020, less than 54% of the population had access to a basic drinking water service
134 and 12% used a basic sanitation service (SDG6) (Sachs et al., 2023). Around 65% of the urban
135 population have access to improved drinking water piped on premises and 67% of the urban
136 population is living in slums (SDG11 "sustainable cities and communities"). This situation not

137 only impacts health but also renders living conditions arduous for the population.

138 These multiple simultaneous hard conditions induce great challenges for the youth and
139 limit the possibilities for optimal development, increases the risk of disadvantage for children
140 and threaten their well-being (Silva-Leander, 2020).

141

142 **1.2. Contribution of extracurricular activities for youth**

143 Challenging circumstances in Madagascar make it difficult for many adolescents to
144 access extracurricular programs. Programs may either be unavailable in certain areas or factors
145 such as extreme poverty, limited access to resources, and prioritizing work or household
146 responsibilities (as highlighted in point 1.1) contribute to the limitation in accessibility for youth.

147 In the present research, EA are defined as structured and organized activities,
148 contrasting with unstructured activities that youth may engage, such as watching television,
149 listening to music, socializing with peers, or simply resting (Mahoney et al., 2005). Organized
150 activities follow a regular schedule, involve peer integration, are supervised by adults, are
151 typically voluntary, focus on the acquisition of specific skills, foster positive youth development,
152 and are not part of the school curriculum (Bohnert et al., 2010; Mahoney et al., 2005). Examples
153 of organized activities include sports, arts and community programs (Eccles & Barber, 1999;
154 Hansen et al., 2003). Participation in activities is commonly measured by the number of
155 activities an adolescent is involved in or by the intensity of participation, such as the number of
156 hours spent in the activity over a given period (Denault & Poulin, 2009).

157 Literature reviews have highlighted the existence of positive links between EA and
158 outcomes as extensive as education, academic achievement, enhanced psychosocial
159 competencies, well-being, interpersonal relations, mental and physical health, as well as
160 diminution of risky behaviors like substance abuse, delinquency or unprotected sex (Berger et
161 al., 2020; Boelens et al., 2022; Bohnert et al., 2010; Farb & Matjasko, 2012; O'Flaherty et al.,
162 2022; Shulruf, 2010). In this project, EA are conceptualized as a way to avoid negative
163 consequences (Eccles et al., 2003) as well as an opportunity to optimize youth development
164 (Lerner et al., 2015).

165 Extracurricular programs have been envisioned to facilitate positive outcomes for youth
166 through four mechanisms (O'Flaherty et al., 2022). The first mechanism is called the transfer
167 paradigm, whereas the cognitive and non-cognitive skills learnt in the extracurricular program
168 are transferred to other contexts, like formal education context as an example. The second
169 mechanism concerns the opportunity for youth in EA to develop positive relationships both
170 with peers or adults, and raise their feeling of inclusion in the broader community (e.g., school).
171 The third mechanism concerns the youth status, as if engaging in EA was sending a signal to
172 key figures, like teachers or peers' parents for example, that youth have the necessary cultural
173 knowledge and skills to engage in social networks and environments that offer significant
174 advantages and opportunities. The fourth mechanism relates to offering a structured
175 alternative to unstructured time. It is presumed that engaging in EA offer greater benefits,
176 mitigating the potential for risk-taking behaviors and delinquency that unstructured time may
177 foster.

178 In sum, there is limited knowledge regarding the outcomes of extracurricular programs
179 for youth living in extreme developmental contexts as described earlier. Yet, the specific

180 conditions and challenges faced by youth in these contexts could have an impact on their
181 experiences within extracurricular programs. These unique circumstances may shape the way
182 they engage with and benefit from these programs, influencing their participation, learning, and
183 overall outcomes. It is important to consider these contextual factors when examining the
184 effects and effectiveness of extracurricular programs in such environments.

185

186 *1.3. Objectives of the study*

187 As part of a larger project on youth participating in extracurricular programs in extreme context
188 (Author1 et al., Submitted) , this research aims to address the gap in knowledge on how youth
189 participation in extracurricular programs supports their development in extreme contexts.
190 Specifically, the objectives are to explore and gain a better understanding of the experience of
191 youth who engage in EA within an extreme context, in the south of Madagascar. This research
192 aims to shed light on the unique dynamics and impacts of extracurricular engagement in such
193 extreme circumstances.

194

195 **2. METHODS**

196 To meet this goal a qualitative methodology is proposed. This collaborative project
197 between three organizations, namely the NGO, the University 1 and the University 2. is focusing
198 on the experience of participation in EA for adolescents living in extreme conditions.
199 This study focuses on two types of organized activities: a) artistic activities, including a
200 percussion group, marching band, circus group, as well as b) sports activities, specifically soccer
201 and basketball groups. These activities are scheduled at fixed times and on specific days of the
202 week. Adolescents gather twice a week for sessions lasting between one and a half to two
203 hours. Adult supervisors oversee these collective activities, which aim to foster the positive
204 development of young people and cultivate their artistic, sporting, and social skills.

205

206 *2.1. Participants and tools*

207 A total of fourteen (N=14) semi-structured interviews were conducted in June 2021. The
208 interviews involved seven (n=7) participants who identified as female¹ and seven (n=7)
209 participants who identified as male. Five (n=5) participants were engaged in sport activities and
210 eight (n=8) participants were engaged in art-music activities. One participant was engaged in
211 both types of activities simultaneously. All participants fell within the age range of 15 to 19
212 years old (see Table 1). After sixteen months of being engaged in EA, namely soccer, basketball,
213 marching band, circus, and/or percussion group activities, which were offered by a Malagasy
214 NGO (Author1 et al., Submitted), these adolescents were interviewed. Two Malagasy research
215 assistants (initials of researchers) separately conducted the interviews. Participants who
216 identified as females were interviewed by the female researcher and participants who identified
217 as males were interviewed by the male researcher. Interviews lasted between 23 and 77

¹ This terminology allows for a more inclusive and accurate representation of diverse gender identities within the study population.

218 minutes (see table 1).

219

220 *Table 1: Sample description*

Interviews	Gen- der	Age (years)	Interview length (minutes)	Activity type	Activities
P1	M	19	77	Art-Music	Marching band
P2	F	15	68	Art-Music-Sport	Percussion-Soccer
P3	F	15	50	Sport	Soccer
P4	F	15	52	Art-Music	Percussion
P5	F	15	45	Art-Music	Percussion
P6	F	17	47	Art-Music	Marching band
P7	M	16	47	Art	Circus
P8	M	16	36	Sport	Soccer
P9	M	19	52	Art-Music	Marching band
P10	M	16	41	Sport	Basketball
P11	M	17	23	Sport	Basketball
P12	F	15	47	Sport	Basketball
P13	M	19	62	Art-Music	Marching band
P14	F	15	39	Art-Music	Percussion
M (SD)		16.36 (1.60)	49 (13.5)		

221

222 **2.2. Analysis**

223 For analysis purpose, all interviews were first transcribed in Malagasy, then translated
224 into French by an independent professional Malagasy translator. A thematic analysis, following
225 the six phases of analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2020), was performed by two
226 researchers: one Malagasy (initials of researcher) and a non-Malagasy (initials of researcher).
227 Each interview was coded independently by the two researchers. The analysis process was
228 supported by Nvivo12TM.

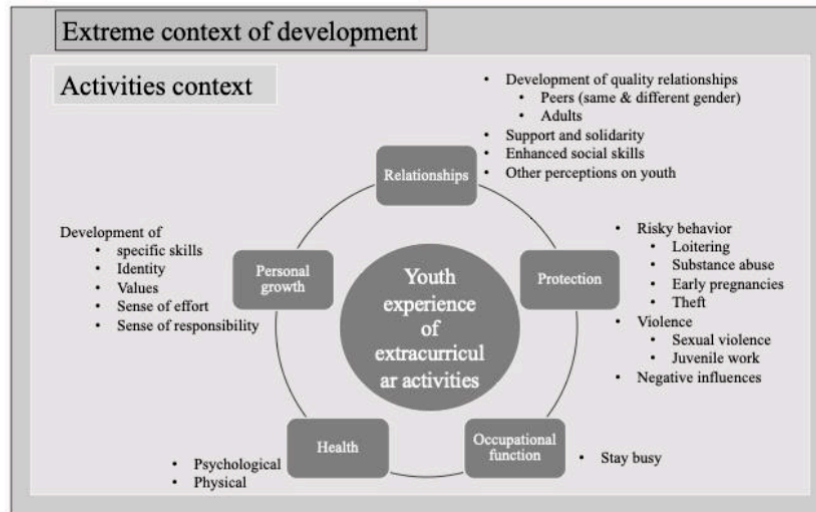
229 The collaborative research approach aimed to ensure that the analysis remained rooted
230 in the cultural context through the perspective of the Malagasy researcher, while also
231 benefiting from an external viewpoint on the reality presented by the youth. The confrontation
232 of the interpretations significantly enriched the understanding of the phenomenon under
233 study.

234

235 **3. RESULTS**

236 From the transcribed verbatim of the fourteen interviews, various themes were
237 extracted regarding the common experience of adolescents participating in EA like music, art

238 and sport in an extreme context of development. Three main thematic were identified based
 239 on participants narratives (see Figure 1): context of development, context of the activity and
 240 youth experience of the activities. The results section is presented according to these three
 241 thematic. Youth experience of activities was divided into five main themes and concerned
 242 relationships, personal development, protection, health and occupational function. These
 243 points are presented in order of importance. That is to say that the thematic relationships had
 244 the most references and the thematic regarding the occupational function of the activity had
 245 the least references.
 246



247

248

Figure 1: Findings visualisation

249

250 3.1. Context description

251 As mentioned, the region of Toliara can be characterized as an extreme context of
 252 development. Participants confirmed this through discussions about their daily lives,
 253 highlighting the extreme conditions. Regarding their daily concerns, adolescents primarily
 254 mention insecurity as a significant issue. They express worries about various forms of violence,
 255 such as burglary, theft, murder, kidnapping, sexual violence and organ trafficking (mostly eyes,
 256 relatively to traditional, spiritual and cultural practice). Certain neighborhoods are particularly
 257 perceived as unsafe, with some alleys that many youth have to pass through on their way home
 258 being considered especially dangerous. The lack of street lighting at night or frequent power
 259 outages exacerbate the situation according to them. They mention the practice of walking to
 260 and from activities in groups to enhance their safety.

261

262 *“Several young people from our neighborhood practiced capoeira. (...) we would go home*

263 *together because going home alone is not good for me. (...) When there are no friends, (...) I walk*
264 *alone and quickly so as not to be late". P2-Female.*

265
266 Some adolescents have even changed their activity schedules to earlier hours to avoid
267 being outside during the evening hours (between 6 to 9 PM). Another strategy they use to
268 manage the risk of burglary, is organizing themselves to ensure that someone is always present
269 at home, thus avoiding the situation of returning to an empty house. They observe a rise in
270 insecurity as they say that burglary, theft, murder, kidnapping, organ trafficking, and sexual
271 violence are more and more common. Some associate it with the COVID-19 pandemic that
272 prevailed at that time.

273 Secondly, adolescents evoke poverty both for their community and for themselves.
274 Once again, the COVID-19 pandemic situation appears to have worsened the situation. They
275 mention the presence of many people begging in the streets in order to survive. Young people
276 mention a rise in basic food price like rice, dried seeds, potatoes, meat and fish as well as
277 financial concern to buy clothes and shoes or pay school tuition fees. Some mention not having
278 enough to eat at home. Financially struggling, some families have sent children to social
279 shelters.

280
281 *"Sometimes we have nothing to put in the pot (nothing to eat), and sometimes we do.*
282 *Sometimes we don't eat in the morning or in the evening. And ultimately, we don't stay at home (...)*
283 *Full-time jobs are also non-existent". P2-Female*

284 *"[I live with] two cousins, my grandmother, my uncle, and my father. We sent my little sister to*
285 *the shelter because life is so tough right now". P13-Male*

286 *"Now I have a lot of worries. Life is hitting me hard, and we don't have enough means.*
287 *Regarding schooling, the tuition fees". P8-Male*

288
289 Finally, the challenging living conditions have a significant impact on their mental well-
290 being and on their families. They express experiencing sadness and discomfort when it comes
291 to their own living situation and the conditions faced by their family and community.
292 Specifically, they discuss the issues of poverty, violence, and insecurity. Their family members
293 are also deeply concerned and fearful due to the prevailing sense of insecurity.

294
295 *My journey back home makes her [the grand-mother] nervous. "People even commit thefts in*
296 *broad daylight. So, at night, it's worse and someone could kill you" (...) Returning home late at night*
297 *really makes my grandmother nervous because organ trafficking, especially for eyes, has become*
298 *common; burglaries too". P6-Female*

300 **3.2. Activities description**

301 The adolescents provide a detailed account of the organization of their activities. The
302 activities are scheduled throughout the week, with specific days allocated for each type of
303 activity. The majority of activities take place on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.
304 However, certain groups like the percussion group and the marching band have sessions on
305 other days after school, usually starting around 6 pm. During school holidays, activities are

306 available every day. It is evident that the adolescents are committed to attending their activities
307 regularly, with some mentioning that they are present every single weekend. However, they
308 also mentioned a few reasons that might cause them to miss a session, such as having school
309 exams, being sick or having to take care of a sick family member, visiting relatives in the
310 countryside, or their parents disagreeing with the activity's schedule, especially if they feel it is
311 too late in the day.

312 The structure of the activities, whether they are art, music, or sports-related, seem to be
313 quite similar. A typical session begins with each participant greeting the supervisor and then
314 obtaining from them the necessary equipment, such as balls, jersey covers, or instruments. The
315 session starts with a group meeting led by the activity supervisor. In sports activities, the young
316 people then proceed to warm-up and train on various techniques, usually concluding with a
317 few matches among themselves. In art and music groups, they begin by practicing either in
318 smaller groups or as a whole, focusing on more technical aspects, and eventually regrouping to
319 practice together.

320 Each activity has a general supervisor who is often assisted by more advanced
321 participants or a formal assistant. They express appreciation for the well-organized nature of
322 the activities. Those involved in sports activities enjoy participating in interclub matches from
323 time to time. They appreciate the challenge and the opportunity to compete against unfamiliar
324 opponents, which helps them improve. However, some participants suggest that improvements
325 could be made to the sports fields.

326
327 *"I would like for the field to be changed, (...). It needs more sand because there are small rocks*
328 *coming out and they hurt the players when they fall. And when it rains, we can't play on it because it*
329 *gets flooded". P3-Female*

330
331 The art and music activities give opportunity to youth to participate in public
332 representations and even national and international tours. Every year, ten to fifteen
333 adolescents from either the percussion group or the marching band, go on tours. They
334 mention appreciating the chance to participate in these representations throughout the year
335 and show what they are able to perform. Young people involved in all types of activities
336 mention that these matches or representations allow them to travel outside of their
337 hometown. Some mention that they never left their hometown before and that the
338 participation in these activities provide them with the opportunity to explore other places,
339 including different regions of the country or even overseas.

340
341 *"I enjoy visiting distant cities during tours. On these trips, we visit places like Antananarivo or*
342 *Fianarantsoa, for example. That's why I love the percussion group". P14-Female*

343
344 While some participants were inspired to join the activities through public
345 representations of the different groups, most of them were invited by a participant who was a
346 friend or a family member. They appreciate the opportunity to freely choose which activity they
347 will do and to access quality materials, particularly musical instruments, and having matching
348 clothing for the public representations.

349 **3.3. Youth experience of the activities**

350 In addition to providing detailed descriptions on their life context and the activities they
351 engage in, adolescents also shared significant insights regarding their experience in these
352 activities. Organized into five main themes, they encompass the social and relational sphere,
353 personal growth, protection from challenging environments, health, and the occupational
354 function of the activities in their daily lives.

355
356 **3.3.1. Relationships**

357 The dominant theme across our participants discussion about their experience in the
358 EA is centered around their interpersonal relationships. Adolescents mention that the
359 participation in EA largely influence their social sphere as participating in activities give them
360 the opportunity to enrich their social relations. This program gives them a space where they
361 can develop relationships with their peers and make new acquaintances and friendships.
362 Indeed, these connections are described as quality relations, where they are caring for each
363 other. The activity is told to be a harmonious, cooperative and amicable environment. They
364 compare the affinities they develop in the activity to a family relationship, referring to their
365 peers as sisters and brothers. Even though, they did not know each other before, the activity
366 brought them together.

367
368 *“What has changed is that (...) I now know how to maintain relationships with people. I talk
369 with friends, rejoice with them, and sympathize with their difficulties”.* P13-Male

370 *“I hardly knew anyone before coming here. But being invited to join the team has allowed me
371 to make a lot of friends. Now, I consider them as my family”.* P8-Male

372
373 As mentioned here, relationships are developed between peers of the same and other
374 genders. From our participants discourse, girls and boys appear to have an opportunity to
375 develop healthy relationships.

376 *“Whether it's boys or girls, it's good. It's not like people fighting, but we're all friends
377 there”.* P6-Female

378 Adolescents describe the activity as a space where they experience support and
379 solidarity between peers. Young people are helping each other in the learning process and
380 share their knowledge or competences. If someone does not know how to play a rhythm,
381 perform a circus figure, wants to learn a new instrument, they support each other in the group
382 to help the learner.

383
384 *“If someone doesn't know how to play, we teach them. If you don't know, there's already
385 someone who does. (...) I just have to ask, (...) and she [friend] shows me. That's how it is at the
386 percussion group. No one is selfish. When you master something, you share it with others. We learn
387 there. And if no one knows, we ask madame”.* P2-Female

388
389 Beyond the practice of the activity itself, young people will support each other when
390 adversity happens to a group member. Other members of the group will offer emotional
391 support, clothes or even pool money to assist their fellow member in need.

392
393 *“We support each other. Like when I lost a family member, they offered their condolences and*
394 *collected contributions for me. They also contribute in case of illness. (...) They help each other too. (...)*
395 *Because our house was burglarized last Saturday, the thieves took everything and we are left with*
396 *only the bed. So, my friends gave me clothes, three each”.* P5-Female

397
398 If the friendship between peers seems to be strong in the context of the activity,
399 participants suggest that it is continued outside of the activity, in their daily life. For example,
400 they accompany each other from or to the activity, they go to the market together, they go to
401 the beach after the activity, they go to each other’s home or meet to hang out and chat about
402 their life or the activity. Some mention that they knew fellow members of their group from
403 school, whether they were already friends or not.

404
405 *« When there are things, I don't know at school or at the percussion group, she [friend]*
406 *teaches them to me during recess at school. »* P4-Female

407
408 As we understand from the discourse of the adolescents, not only relations with peers
409 are rich in the context of the activity, but also youth develop quality relations with adults within
410 the activity. Those adults are the supervisors of the activity, their coach or the coordinators of
411 the activity center. Based on the conversations with young people, it is noticeable that they
412 seem to form genuine connections with these adults. They describe these adults as role
413 models, sources of knowledge and inspiration, as well as individuals who genuinely care for
414 their well-being.

415 Engaging in EA appears to enhance the social skills of certain adolescents. In particular,
416 they emphasize that the activity’s environment enables them to enhance their skills in resolving
417 potential conflicts with their peers. Youth gave us some examples of the conflicts they
418 experience like teasing one another, jealousy, report on others, backbiting or rivalry among
419 others. The activity supervisors appear to have a significant role in facilitating the learning
420 process of effectively managing conflicts. Also, a number of participants expressed that taking
421 part in the activities has helped alleviate social anxiety, being more talkative, and sustaining
422 relationships.

423 Ultimately, adolescents describe how their involvement in the program has led to
424 changes in how others perceive them and their engagement in music, art, and sports activities.
425 Since their involvement in the activity began, the youth now perceive a shift in how their family
426 see them. They report that their family view them as more daring and less shy. The families
427 seem to perceive that they have become less short-tempered and happier and that they notice
428 progress in the youth’s skills related to its activity.

429
430 *“They see changes in me. They've told me. I've become more daring, I'm no longer shy in my*
431 *actions, I'm not like others who get angry easily, my hands are more skillful in music. My*
432 *grandmother is surprised to see me like this (...) Also, I am smiling”.* P13-Male

433
434 From the youth's perspective, their families appreciate that they have distanced

435 themselves from negative acquaintances, made new positive relationships and are no longer
436 engaging in aimless loitering. Parents feel reassured by the structured activity environment, as
437 it provides a safer alternative to the streets where their children could potentially get injured.
438 They find it positive that they get involved in physical activities and occupy themselves with
439 constructive occupations. Youth perceive that it makes their parents happy when they see
440 them perform with their group. Some youth also say that they are encouraged by their parents
441 to participate in these activities. Participating in the activity appears to foster a sense of
442 connection with their family for certain individuals, as some of their relatives also share an
443 interest in the same activity. Parents are also reported to appreciate it when youth bring home
444 the snacks they receive each time they go to the activity and share them with the family. If, for
445 the most part, the family holds a positive perception of the activity, the participation of their
446 youth can still give rise to some conflicts. The schedule of the activities can become a source of
447 conflict between the youth and their family. These conflicts are not directly related to the
448 activity itself, but rather stem from the family's concerns about the safety of their youth on the
449 way back. From the youth's perspective, some parents occasionally express concerns that
450 engaging in EA might divert the young person's attention from their schoolwork.

451 The perception of society towards the youth appears to have been positively influenced
452 as well. Indeed, participating in an EA has granted the youth a sense of notoriety within the
453 community. Neighbors enthusiastically support them during their representations or matches,
454 while the young people of the neighborhood are more welcoming towards those involved in
455 these activities. The community perceives them as wise individuals who are engaged in
456 constructive activities instead of aimlessly loitering.

457

458 3.3.2. Personal development/growth

459 Adolescents appear to see the extracurricular program as a place where they can learn.
460 They acquire specific skills directly associated with their activities, like reading music, mastering
461 a musical instrument, a specific figure, or a particular technique for example. Most of the
462 activities also contribute to the development of the youth's motor skills. As they mention
463 through numerous examples, their coordination skills are greatly challenged and improved
464 through regular practice.

465

466 *"When I don't understand certain things, I ask the educators how to do it. Then they show me,*
467 *and I have to focus while watching them. If I still can't do it, they stand behind me, take my hands,*
468 *and guide me. Then I start to get used to it". P13-Male*

469

470 Youth in both art and sport activities mention indirectly oculo-motor coordination as a
471 skill they are practicing. They highlight that the purpose of these activities extends beyond
472 teaching them the specific skills of the activity itself. They emphasize that the activities aim to
473 provide a broader education and transmit values. Indeed, young people also express that
474 through their participation in EA, they learn important skills such as punctuality, active listening
475 to instructions, adhering to rules, and incorporating feedback.

476

477 *"Participating in the activity teaches us to be well-behaved, but not to misbehave. It's not just*

478 *about playing the instrument, but also about educating us. We are educated so that we are not led*
479 *astray by other things” P1-Male*

480

481 They also mention that by enrolling in these activities, they have the opportunity to go
482 on field trips that expand their knowledge about the environment. For instance, they recall
483 visiting a regenerating site of a mangrove forest where they learned about sustainable
484 practices for preserving this ecosystem.

485 Some individuals draw comparisons with school, highlighting that learning is not limited
486 to the classroom, and emphasizing that EA provide excellent opportunities for learning.

487

488 *“The percussion group is like a school. Learning is not only at school but also in the group.*
489 *There, we learn manners and everything we should learn. Even in sports, we learn. Everything is*
490 *learning. (...) Even in sports, they suggest to us, “you should visit the Art and Music Centre and read*
491 *books”, and we read books there”. P2-Female*

492

493 Even though that comparison is made, many adolescents value their formal education.
494 They mention that being enrolled in EA help them access education and tutoring support. They
495 also mention that during the exam period, they may temporarily set aside the activity to
496 prioritize their studies.

497

498 *Regarding my parents. (...) I don't know, but sometimes I think about our struggles. To help*
499 *us, there is nothing but my studies. Since we don't have an inheritance, education is the best legacy.*
500 *(...) There is also a (...) library at the Art and Music Centre. We bring the lessons we don't understand*
501 *there, and a lady explains them to us. We can also read books there”. P14-Female*

502

503 Various aspects of youth discourse suggest that involvement in EA supports the
504 development of their identity. Adolescents share that they feel that their participation in EA
505 develops their maturity. They acknowledge that they used to engage in mischievous behavior
506 and teasing others. However, over time, their interactions with peers and activity supervisors
507 had a transformative effect on them. They seem to have learned how to better interact with
508 their environment. They express a sense of contentment with the positive changes they have
509 experienced.

510

511 *“I became more thoughtful little by little. I am happy because my life is no longer like it used*
512 *to be”. P4-Female*

513

514 Participation in EA appears to foster the development of youth's own values. Indeed,
515 they mention the growth of their understanding of what is considered "good" and "bad,"
516 expressing a desire to engage in constructive activities and distance themselves from
517 potentially harmful behaviors. They emphasize the importance of taking things seriously and
518 approaching tasks with dedication. Furthermore, they highlight the significance of displaying
519 good manners, being courteous and kind towards others, and showing respect within their
520 community. They express a sense of increased wisdom resulting from their involvement in

521 these activities.

522
523 *"When I was in the countryside, my friends taught me to be stubborn and I followed them.*
524 *Then I moved here because my father had passed away and my grandmother took us in. (...) She*
525 *enrolled me in the NGO at that time. And I changed a bit. (...) When she enrolled me (...), I was still*
526 *being scolded by the educators, so I became more thoughtful". P4-Female*

527
528 They express that they now befriend peers based on shared values and attitudes. They
529 explicitly state that their participation in EA enables them to learn values such as courage,
530 perseverance, responsibility for shared resources, mutual respect, morality, teamwork, and fair
531 play. Whether it is the mastering of the activity itself or to surpass personal fears, adolescents
532 mention the importance of exerting effort, taking on challenges, being creative and pushing
533 themselves to go beyond their limits in order to achieve personal goals. They emphasize the
534 value of consistent practice, both during the activity and in their personal time, in order to
535 improve their skills and experience a sense of mastery.

536
537 *"I love this game, so I will do everything to master it. My priority is studies, but I still play*
538 *soccer because I enjoy it. It has been my desire for a long time". P3-Female*

539 *"I didn't know how to do a somersault. (...) But I learned at home and now I know how to do*
540 *it. When I came here, before rehearsals started, I practiced on the side with the capoeira students. I*
541 *learned that way". P7-Male*

542
543 Involvement in the activities seems to foster the sense of belonging to something bigger
544 than themselves. Adolescents discuss their sense of connection and express a certain level of
545 pride regarding the achievements of their group.

546
547 *"I asked some friends to take videos, and they sent them to me on Facebook to show what*
548 *they did there. It's nice to see them, as if I was with them. (...) during these events, people talk about*
549 *the CITY marching band". P13-Male*

550
551 It appears that this involvement helps them identifying what they wish and want for
552 themselves, who they want to be or become, enabling them to recognize their own potential
553 for accomplishment.

554
555 *"I tell them [my family], 'When you do something, do it seriously with all your heart, but not*
556 *haphazardly'. I don't have peace of mind (...) for example, if I take an exam and don't do it*
557 *wholeheartedly". P2-Female*

558 *"I am accustomed to sports. Thanks to that, I can endure anything, I don't back down from*
559 *anything". P8-Male*

560
561 Adolescents are entrusted with a range of responsibilities across the activities. Some are
562 elected as representatives by their groups, while others are tasked with managing and storing
563 instruments on-site or during off-site performances. They can assume the responsibility of

564 forming sub-groups of learners or instructing beginners. Skilled participants can act as
565 competent peers in the absence of supervisors. Furthermore, they can be entrusted with
566 facilitating efficient communication between the administration and the rest of the group,
567 fostering mutual support during the learning process, and ensuring the upkeep and cleanliness
568 of the materials. It seems that these responsibilities instill a sense of pride in certain
569 adolescents.

570
571 *"We all have responsibilities. The leaders share them like, 'Your responsibility is to teach the*
572 *newcomers. Yours is to instruct those who need to be taught. And for you, it's to organize the*
573 *instruments". P2-Female*

574
575 Finally, activities feel like a space where youth learn to deal with their emotions. Young
576 people point out that when they feel frustrated, they are tempted to play aggressively, hitting
577 the instrument harder than they should. This also affects their performance when they are sad.

578
579 *"You're obliged to smile when you hear the music. But if you don't smile, you'll hurt your hand*
580 *with the drumsticks". P2-Female*

581
582 *3.3.3. Protection*

583 Adolescents engaged in EA are expressing that these activities provide them with a safe
584 space where they can find protection against the adoption of risky behaviors. The various
585 behaviors mentioned by the youth primarily revolve around loitering, both during the day and
586 night hours. Young people emphasize that participating in the activity keeps them occupied
587 with constructive activities, filling up their schedule between school, homework, and chores,
588 and preventing them from wasting time. They express that by staying busy and avoiding
589 loitering, they are less tempted to engage in other risky behaviors such as criminal activities like
590 theft or indulging in harmful consumption behaviors like smoking cigarettes or using drugs.
591 According to the youth, loitering in the streets, whether during the day or night, can also
592 expose adolescents, particularly girls, to behaviors that may increase the risk of early
593 pregnancy.

594
595 *"There are educators and activities to ensure that the children don't loiter aimlessly. So that*
596 *they enjoy themselves and don't wander just anywhere. (...) [The goal of the organization is] to protect*
597 *the children, the minors. So that the children don't do just anything. Like for example, having a*
598 *boyfriend or girlfriend and getting pregnant". P4-Female*

599
600 The youth identify prostitution as one of the causes of early pregnancy among girls.
601 They describe prostitution as a behavior that some girls adopt or are compelled to adopt due
602 to family pressures or circumstances. Protection against sexual violence is highlighted as one of
603 the benefits of being involved in the activities. As mentioned, sexual violence encompasses
604 being coerced into prostitution as well as incidents of rape. The youth express that rape is
605 prevalent in their community and perceive it to be on the rise. It primarily affects girls, but boys
606 can also be victims.

607

608 *"For example, they go out at night to clubs, they meet foreigners which leads to pregnancy.*609 *But there are also children who are sent by their parents. It's not their will, but it's the parents who*610 *send them, so they have to go". P5-Female*611 *"The idea of the organization in doing this is to eradicate rape, murder, and poverty. Perhaps*612 *there will always be some, but not like before, at least". P1-Male*

613

614 In addition to sexual violence, adolescents feel that their involvement in EA protects

615 them from other forms of violence such as theft, physical altercations, assault, and even

616 murder. They also mention that participating in these activities shields them from having to

617 work as street vendors for example, which exposes them to potential harm.

618

619 *"[Before participating in the activities], I didn't do anything except play ball at home (...) or sell*620 *things. (...) I stopped selling because I started doing the activities". P4-Female*

621

622 Additionally, the youth envision their activities as a protective space against negative

623 influences. Many youth mention that by participating in these activities, they have distanced

624 themselves from former acquaintances who were leading them towards adopting risky

625 behaviors. They express their desire to find new friends who share more positive values and

626 aspirations.

627

628 *"I wanted to integrate in order to avoid the influence of friends. (...) The ones who smoke weed,*629 *for example. (...) To avoid them and protect myself from their influence, I prefer to engage in activities.*630 *(...) I prefer to be with people like me who don't do wrong things like them. (...) In the end, I no longer*631 *hung out with them. (...) I am doing new things that suit my maturity". P1-Male*

632

633 They also mention that beyond proximal negative influence, from former peers,

634 watching the behaviors of certain members of the community can have an impact on their

635 tendency to adopt potentially harmful behaviors. They recognize that the behaviors exhibited

636 by these individuals can influence their own actions and choices. By participating in EA, they

637 find a sense of protection and distance themselves from negative community influences,

638 allowing them to focus on more positive and constructive pathways. Lastly, some of them

639 mention how the activity program supports, protects, values and respect their rights as young

640 people.

641

642

3.3.4. Health

643 Adolescents make reference to health when speaking about their EA. The most

644 commonly discussed aspect of health is the physical component, predominantly mentioned by

645 participants engaged in sports activities. Specifically, adolescents involved in sport activities

646 emphasize how their chosen sport strengthens their bodies, boosts their energy levels, and

647 helps maintain overall health. They also highlight the support provided by activity supervisors in

648 case of injuries, ensuring proper care and attention.

649 In addition to the physical aspect of health, young people engaged in both art and sport

650 activities highlight the benefits of participating in EA for their mental health and psychological
651 well-being. They express that engaging in these activities positively impacts them mentally. The
652 activity environment provides them with a sense of peace of mind to play, practice their activity,
653 and study. Many adolescents mention experiencing positive emotions associated with the
654 practice of their activity. They describe feelings of joy, happiness, smiling, laughter, a sense of
655 freedom, fun, motivation, and relaxation.

656
657 *“There, we have peace of mind. We have activities, we study and practice, we play*
658 *instruments”*. P9-Male

659 *“Everything is well organized. It's great to play there. The children are calm. They are not*
660 *rough”*. P12-Female

661 *“Regarding sports, it's beneficial. Sports are very useful. It's also a pastime, and the body*
662 *needs it. (...) Seeing my friends play soccer with their physical and mental improvements, I am*
663 *naturally drawn to it. (...) Now, it has even become a necessity. Specially to stay in shape. (...) Sports*
664 *really help, the body needs it”*. P8-Male

665
666 **3.3.5. Occupational function (keeping busy)**

667 Adolescents explain that participating in EA enables them to stay active and engaged.
668 They mention that prior to their involvement in these activities, they had nothing to do. Without
669 the activities, they would either stay at home with no purpose or go outside and loiter. The
670 youth express a desire to avoid wasting their time and feeling lazy. Instead, they want to occupy
671 their time and minds with interesting activities, seeking amusement and enjoyment. They
672 appreciate the opportunity to be involved in activities that keep them occupied.

673
674 *“Coming here is a way to use one's time differently, engaging in more interesting activities*
675 *instead of doing other things elsewhere. These activities occupy the mind”*. P8-Male

676
677 Even when there are no scheduled activities at the center, the youth mention that they
678 can still come and engage themselves. They have access to books for reading, and in both art
679 and sport centers, they can request to borrow equipment to play or exercise. They are
680 welcome to visit the center anytime for conversations with staff members. They also mention
681 that outside the activity schedule, the centers provide school support if needed. The youth say
682 that they appreciate the fact that they can access the centers outside of activity hours, allowing
683 them to utilize the resources and support available to them.

684
685 *“Coming here has helped me a lot. Sometimes when we don't have classes, (...) [we] can come*
686 *to the office just to talk, and the educators provide assistance”*. P14-Female

687 *“In sports, when we come there, even if it's not a training day like Wednesday and Saturday,*
688 *we will still have balls and we play. Even the coach plays with us”*. P2-Female

689

690 **4. DISCUSSION**

691 To gain a better understanding of the experience of adolescents who engage in EA

692 within an extreme context, one-on-one interviews were conducted with fourteen teenagers
693 involved in art, music and sport activities. They describe having the opportunity to get involved
694 in organized activities, independent from school organization, that clearly aim to foster their
695 positive development. The activities are described as having a regular schedule and supervised
696 by an adult. They have mentioned having the choice over which activity they want to integrate.

697 The insights provided by the youth regarding the environment they are developing in
698 strongly support the notion that the context being examined in this research can be
699 characterized as extremely challenging. Numerous reports (Sachs et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2014,
700 2018) consistently highlight the hardships experienced by the Malagasy youth on a daily basis,
701 including factors such as insecurity, malnutrition, demanding labor, restricted freedoms, limited
702 healthcare access, and a scarcity of essential resources (Bettelheim, 1943). These factors are
703 clearly evident in the discourse of the youth.

704

705 **4.1. Feeling of protection**

706 Concerns about insecurity are raised by our participants. Part of it can be labeled as
707 “trafficking in persons”². This phenomenon thrives in fragile contexts and presents further
708 threats to the stability, security, and human rights of the affected countries and their popula-
709 tions (Warria, 2022). From the discourse of our participants, it is evident that the South of Mad-
710 agascar is not immune to this phenomenon, leading to a profound sense of insecurity among
711 the young population residing in the region. To counteract this feeling, EA seem to play an im-
712 portant role. Activities seem to act here as a protective factor for youth, where they can find a
713 safe space. A place where they feel protected against multiple violence (sexual, physical, psy-
714 chological), against the infringement of their rights, and from engaging in risky behaviors (Eccles
715 et al., 2003; O’Flaherty et al., 2022), where they can develop stronger values, like notions of
716 what is “good” and “bad”, manners, respect, dedication, or seriousness.

717

718 **4.2. Building meaningful connections**

719 The activity also serves an occupational function by keeping youth engaged in struc-
720 tured activities, preventing them from idling or loitering during unstructured time, and steering
721 them away from negative influences or wrong paths. (O’Flaherty et al., 2022), potentially lead by
722 negative influences in their social network. Instead, adolescents come to the activity, develop
723 new abilities, meet with peers and build meaningful connections with young people of diverse
724 genders. Development of relationship is a critical part of adolescence and previous research
725 has shown how EA can be a place of choice to develop a social network (O’Flaherty et al., 2022).
726 Activities seem to be a safe space for youth that provide opportunity to build meaningful rela-
727 tionships (Berger et al., 2020). As our participants vastly mentioned, EA are a prime space to de-
728 velop quality relationships, a safe space where they have the chance to fulfil their need for re-
729 latedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) by taking care of their peers and being taken care of by their
730 peers or adults they can trust.

² The United Nations convention against transnational organized crime, (2000). defines trafficking as various means of controlling or coercing individuals for exploitation purposes, including sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, servitude, or organ removal.

731 Few participants highlighting adult relationships in their activities align with established
732 research on youth and adult relationships in EA. Indeed, establishing an adequate and nurtur-
733 ing environment appears to be linked to the presence of a positive relationship between the
734 supervisor and the participating adolescents (Jones & Deutsch, 2011). Even though activity su-
735 pervisors did not originally benefit from a formal education in their discipline, they still develop
736 a meaningful connection to youth which seems to contribute to their optimal development.
737 Connections with others are frequently referred to as familial bonds by the participants, sug-
738 gesting that the activities provide a support system akin to family support.

739 **4.3. Personal development**

741 EA are described by the youth as a place where they can develop various skills. Indeed,
742 similar to other research (O'Flaherty et al., 2022), the participants mention practicing not only
743 their social skills but also practical skills directly related to their activity. Repeated practice to
744 master their discipline challenges and motivates them, highlighting how these activities can po-
745 tentially fulfill the youth's need for competency (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

746 Adolescents mention that their activity has brought about various transformations in
747 their lives, and they express satisfaction with these positive changes. Moreover, it seems that
748 the way others perceive them, whether it be family, friends, or neighbors, has also improved.
749 Despite many families acknowledging the positive impact of the activity on their adolescents,
750 the prevailing insecurity in the region can deter young people from participating. Indeed, some
751 families disapprove of late schedules, expressing concerns about their youth's safe return
752 home. However, after years of collaboration with the community, the local NGO identified a cru-
753 cial period in the day when youth often engage in risky behaviors. Introducing late-scheduled
754 activities aims to fill this gap and address the issue effectively.

755 **4.4. Bridge the gap in basic resources**

757 Regarding the challenging context, extreme poverty is clearly mentioned by the youth
758 and seems to induce a lack of access to basic resources like food, clothing and access to educa-
759 tion, with consequences like the frightening reported levels of malnutrition (Sachs et al., 2023)
760 and school enrolment (UNICEF, 2018) in the young Malagasy population. As adolescents men-
761 tion, this extracurricular program seems to answer some of those issues by supporting the en-
762 rolment of teenagers in schools and providing tutoring support. Food distribution are also or-
763 ganized within the activity. Based on field observation, youth are oriented by the activity centers
764 staff towards other programs of the NGO if they require assistance with food or schooling.

765 **4.5. Supports psychological well-being**

767 The consequences of the extreme context mentioned by youth on their mental well-be-
768 ing seems to be slightly mitigated by their participation in the activities. Indeed, associated with
769 hedonic well-being (Diener, 1984), adolescents mention experiencing numerous positive emo-
770 tions while participating in their activities, while reporting very few or no negative emotions. On
771 the other hand, Eudaimonic well-being, rooted in finding meaning and purpose, appears to be
772 supported by the activity program as it gives opportunity to young people to develop them-

773 selves, have a certain level of autonomy, realize their own potential and build bilateral meaning-
774 ful relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2001). If mental health seems to be positively influenced by
775 youth participation in EA, physical health is also mentioned by our participants, although, only
776 in the sports groups. This difference is hypothetically linked to the nature of the activity, where
777 music and art activities involve less physical activity than soccer or basketball. Even though, par-
778 ticipants of all groups have mentioned the contribution of their activities, either music art or
779 sport, for the development of their body coordination.
780

781 **5. LIMITATIONS**

782 There are some limits to this research. Although using the qualitative approach pro-
783 vided access to the perspectives of the youth, it's important to note a constraint in terms of po-
784 tential generalisation of our results. This means that while valuable insights were gained from
785 the specific group studied, it may not be broadly applicable or representative of all similar situa-
786 tions or population.

787 Regarding the analysis process, even though Malagasy researchers were actively en-
788 gaged in all aspects of the research process, particularly in the interview analysis, to ensure it
789 stays firmly grounded in the cultural context, all Malagasy researchers were born and raised in
790 the capital city of Antananarivo. Cultural differences are significant throughout the country and
791 may have shaped the researcher's viewpoint on the data. This aspect has been duly acknowl-
792 edged and addressed during the process of self-reflection (Tracy, 2010).

793 The translation of all interviews from Malagasy to French for analysis purposes may rep-
794 resent a limitation to this research. By translating the discourse of our participants into French,
795 there is a possibility that some of the original meaning and nuances conveyed by the partici-
796 pants might have been lost. To bridge this gap, the Malagasy researcher on the analysis team
797 has reviewed or listened to the original Malagasy discourse if there were any suspicions of mis-
798 understanding or mistranslation of the participants' statements. In the vast majority of cases,
799 the translation remained faithful to the original discourse. If there were any deviations in trans-
800 lation, this practice actually assisted us in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of
801 what the participants intended to express. The decision of translating all interviews from Mala-
802 gasy to French was motivated by the fact that French is one of the official languages of Mada-
803 gascar and the common language shared by all the research team members and the NGO
804 staff. Although the analysis was conducted on the French version of the participants' discourse,
805 the most illustrative quotes from the participants were translated from French to English solely
806 for publication purpose.

807 Another limitation of the present research is that the participants' discourse primarily
808 focused on the positive aspects of the activity. This emphasis hinders a comprehensive under-
809 standing of potential downsides or negative aspects of their experience in the activities. De-
810 spite the interviewing team's effort to encourage discussions about potential negative aspects
811 of the youth experience, the adolescents did not share much information on that potentially
812 negative aspect. One of the hypotheses could be related to a cultural variable. In the Malagasy
813 culture, people are not at ease with potential conflict and rarely confront or say when they dis-

814 approve or dislike something, favoring harmony and peace (Fihavanana) (Hauge, 2011; Wood-
815 ling, 2022). Also, as it is the case in other collectivist culture, young people in Madagascar gen-
816 erally tend to please their eldest. Therefore, the interviewers, even being young adults, are con-
817 sidered as elder by youth, which might prevent a full transparency on their experience. Another
818 possibility is that youth are really pleased with their activity and did not find points to improve.

819 Remote work helps mitigate the costs associated with international research but it
820 comes with its own challenges. It was not always easy to work remotely considering the electric-
821 ity outages that the Malagasy population face on a daily basis. Several times a day, electricity is
822 cut off in many neighborhoods across the country, affecting internet connectivity and making
823 online work difficult. Internet connectivity issues significantly impeded progress and are a real
824 obstacle to research development in the country.
825

826 **6. CONCLUSION**

827 Overall, the results from this collaborative research drawn from our participants views
828 on how they experience their activities offer interesting insights on the value of these programs
829 for youth living in extreme contexts of development. Indeed, extracurricular programs seem to
830 support the process of socialization of youth, their personal growth, give them a sense of pro-
831 tection and support their psychological well-being in a challenging and quite insecure environ-
832 ment, and attempt to bridge the disparities in basic resources. In multiple simultaneous hard
833 conditions, as described by the youth themselves, the possibilities for optimal development are
834 jeopardized. Adolescents living in challenging environments view their extracurricular program
835 as a global initiative, extending beyond the development of specific skills in sports, art, and mu-
836 sic. It also addresses broader concerns such as social integration, education, well-being, and
837 health. Expanding the range of intervention media, like art, music, and sports, could partially
838 address these difficult contexts and provide better opportunities for the future of youth devel-
839 oping in extreme context. The implementation of such programs could create avenues for ad-
840 ditional normal or extraordinary experiences (Horowitz, 2000) fostering the growth and devel-
841 opment of youth living in extreme conditions.

842 Significant investments by international and local NGOs or other international agencies
843 are allocated towards initiatives focusing on health, food, education, water access, and ade-
844 quate housing for the population living in extreme contexts. However, in addition to addressing
845 physical needs, organisations operating in such contexts should also consider comprehensive
846 interventions that address the overall well-being, including the basic psychological needs which
847 are as essential for human growth (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Another quantitative research has ad-
848 dressed these needs as well as the psychological well-being in the very same context (Author1
849 et al., Submitted). It found interesting results on the satisfaction of the need for autonomy, as
850 well as the frustration and satisfaction of the basic psychological needs overall. Even though,
851 that research could not find any change over time on psychological well-being variables or
852 needs for relatedness and competence, in the present research, well-being indicators and the
853 three basic psychological needs are clearly present in the youth discourse. Utilizing a mixed
854 methods approach can thus provide a more comprehensive understanding and a fuller picture
855 of the phenomenon under study. Quantitatively, it validates the impact of programs on certain

856 variables, while qualitatively uncovering additional variables that were not initially considered,
857 opening avenues for their exploration through quantitative analysis. As seen in this qualitative
858 investigation into the impact of extracurricular programs on youth navigating extreme circum-
859 stances, variables such as protection, personal development, and access to basic resources
860 have emerged. Further quantitative exploration of these variables could broaden the applicabil-
861 ity of these findings to a larger sample size.

862 With climatic changes and conflicts rising throughout the world in the last few decades
863 (Corral et al., 2020), extreme contexts of development are gaining ground and affect more and
864 more youth throughout the world. In this challenging time, getting interest into factors like so-
865 cialisation, a feeling of protection, personal growth and psychological well-being is crucial to
866 foster youth development. Researchers could help gaining more understanding on how to sup-
867 port these factors for youth developing in these adverse contexts through extracurricular pro-
868 grams or any other means that seeks youth optimal development.

869 Many extracurricular programs, notably using sport as a development tool, already exist
870 around the world (Svensson & Woods, 2017) . Researchers, practitioners, international institu-
871 tions and policy makers are encouraged to draw on the existing programs, preferably designed
872 by locals for their own population, in order to create initiatives that effectively address the cur-
873 rent needs of youth living in extreme contexts. To accomplish this, it is imperative to conduct
874 additional research, that involve the local community and local academics. These local experts
875 all have extensive knowledge of the local context. Their involvement in research programs rep-
876 resent a valuable asset to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to
877 the effectiveness of these interventions in fostering the optimal development of youth in ex-
878 treme context.

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885 **AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION**

886 LD: Conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation,
887 data curation, writing original draft, writing -review and editing, visualization, project
888 administration. CB: Conceptualization, methodology, validation, writing -review and editing,
889 supervision, funding acquisition. BR: Investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing -review
890 and editing. JLG: Conceptualization, methodology, writing -review and editing. OR:
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904 This research project was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee for
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908 Data availability: Interview respondents were assured raw data would remain confidential and
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Appendix A

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1059

Activity type, age and gender specificities

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If all the adolescents are discussing the themes presented in the results, it is worth

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nuancing that different groups may place varying emphasis on these themes depending on

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their activity type, age and gender.

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Based on the activity type, it seems that participants involved in sports activities exhibit a

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greater concern for relationships compared to personal development. In the art and music

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group, this tendency is inverted with personal development at the forefront of the youth

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discourse, followed by relationships. This difference may be due to the nature of the activities.

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Sport concerned in this research are team sport, which are known to involve group cohesion

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to achieve success (White-Gosselin et al., 2023). Art and music activities may lean more towards

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individual practice. That said, most of the youth were engaged in music groups that, on top of

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individual practice, require cooperation to achieve a harmonious whole, which might explain

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the focus on relationships in second position. The difference between the two activity groups

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could also stem from the initial variation among individuals who opt for sports rather than

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music on this variable. The most prominent difference, beyond health, concerns the protective

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part of the activity. Indeed, individuals in the sport groups speak substantially less about the

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feeling of protection compared to their counterparts in the art and music groups. This

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interesting difference does not seem to be linked to gender representation in each group, as it

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has been quite balanced in the selection of participants and as protection seems to be equally

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discussed with regard to gender. However, the difference of focus may be due to the unfold of

1079 the activity. Our team has observed that in some art and music group, there seems to be more
1080 emphasis made during the sessions on raising of awareness about the consequences of risky
1081 behaviors. In the sport group, the awareness seems more oriented towards the importance of
1082 healthy behaviors. Regarding health, quotes related to psychological well-being were more
1083 prevalent among art or music participants than quotes pertaining to physical health, which got
1084 more attention from the sport group. Once again, the nature of the activity might explain these
1085 differences as messages concerning behaviors to adopt to stay physically healthy and fit for
1086 sport are shared by the coach in the training sessions.

1087 When analyzing the discourse with respect to the age of our participants, it becomes
1088 apparent that younger participants (under 17 years old) tend to place a greater emphasis on
1089 the relationship component within the context of the activity than their older counterparts
1090 (above 17 years old). This difference might be related to the fact that younger people are more
1091 preoccupied by the development of their identity than older teenagers. Therefore, they are
1092 more prompt to socialization and developing friendship to fit in the group. Older participants
1093 have passed this stage and are more oriented towards specific interests and as it seems,
1094 personal development. They also appear to emphasize the protective aspect of the activity
1095 more than the younger participants who seem more concerned by health. The occupational
1096 function of the activity seems to be equally discussed by both groups.

1097 Regarding gender, discourse of participants identifying as females seemed more focused
1098 on the relational development. Participants identifying as male place a higher emphasis on
1099 personal development. It is important to notice that older participants were mostly males
1100 (three males and one female above 17 years old). Therefore, the focus on relationship or

1101 personal development for certain participants might be more related to the age of the
1102 participant than their gender. Health and occupational function of the activity seem to be
1103 equally discussed with regard to gender.

1104 Ultimately, while factors like age, gender, and activity type may have a partial influence on
1105 youth perspectives, the consistent emphasis on specific elements of the activities suggests that
1106 extracurricular programs provide crucial components contributing to their overall
1107 development.

