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Temasektion

Islamic supplementary education as an extra-curricular activity

Keywords: Islamic education, extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities, social capital, bridging and bonding

Sociological studies have shown that teenagers in larger Swedish cities from 'poor result schools' participate in extra-curricular activities connected to religion more frequently than others, and that involvement in such religious activities is positive in terms of educational outcomes for pupils from the lower strata of the social hierarchy. These findings raise new questions about supplementary Islamic education, as this is one type of religious extra-curricular activity found in many such areas. The article is based on interviews with students as well as observations from four Swedish mosques. The purpose is to discuss how we can understand the potentially compensatory effect of supplementary Islamic education. Thus, the emphasis is not on the traditional core of Islamic education, but on what we can call co-curricular Islamic educational activities, such as football, homework help, and mathematics.

Research on Islamic supplementary education in Europe is in many ways in its infancy, especially in the Nordic countries. Some British studies recognize the growing importance of supplementary religious education across a range of communities in general and for the Muslim community in particular (Cherti and Bradley 2011; Ramalingam and Griffith 2015; Gent 2018; Berglund and Gent 2018). Semiha Sözeri et al. (2022) add to the research by addressing the role of mosque education in the integration of Turkish-Dutch Muslim children and Iverssen (forthcoming) shows that many linguistically minoritized students participate in Islamic supplementary education to

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receive instruction in Arabic. In Sweden, I have studied the experiences and reflections of children and young people, particularly the impact of their often-daily movement between mainstream schooling and Islamic supplementary education. The findings demonstrate both positive and negative experiences. One of the most significant results has been that the students claim that several skills can be transferred from Islamic supplementary education to mainstream education, and vice versa. The study also shows that the relationship between these two forms or traditions of education (and by implication, other types of educational traditions as well) is far more subtle, fluid, and nuanced than a polarized characterization suggests (Berglund and Gent 2018; Berglund 2019b). These young Muslims claim that one skill they can transfer is the ability to memorize (the Qur'an in Islamic education, verbs and the periodic system in mainstream school). Reading, reciting, and memorizing the Qur'an can be understood as a type of liturgical literacy. Research has shown that this liturgical literacy often needs to be hidden in the Swedish public school (Berglund 2017; 2019b) since the activities associated with traditional Muslim education are often thought of in polarized terms: as being mutually exclusive and appearing to clash with the ethos and other features of mainstream secular schooling (Boyle 2004; Boakaz 2012; Gent 2015; 2016).

Islamic Supplementary Education as an Extra-curricular Activity

There is sociological research that points in a different direction. Alireza Bethoui (2019) has, for example, shown that teenagers in larger Swedish cities from 'poor result schools' more frequently participate in religious extra-curricular activities than others. Furthermore, he shows that the benefits of involvement in religious organizations are more positive in terms of educational outcomes for pupils from the lower strata of the social hierarchy (Bethoui 2019, 350). Since Muslims constitute the poorest religious minority in Sweden (Willander 2019, 66), the role of supplementary Islamic education as educationally compensatory is therefore of interest. Bethoui's results pose new questions about supplementary Islamic education. How can we understand this education to be compensatory if the students need to hide

the fact that they participate? In order to shed light on this question, I have returned to the experiences of students who move between mainstream education and Islamic supplementary education, but with a different focus. In this article, my focus is not on reading, reciting, and memorizing the Qur'an but on what can be understood as co-curricular Islamic education activities. I do this to argue that these co-curricular activities are an integral part of what we call Islamic supplementary education and that they can be understood as part of the compensatory effect.

Social and Cultural Capital

To balance and enhance the understanding of student experiences, this article employs a constructive understanding of Pierre Bourdieu's pointedly inclusive concepts of cultural and social capital as well as habitus (Bourdieu 1996; 2001). Cultural capital refers to ideas, symbols, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action. Bourdieu connects this to 'habitus', which can be described as an embodied socialized tendency or disposition to act, think, or feel in a particular way. Social capital refers to the amount of actual and potential resources to which an individual has access through social networks and membership in organizations. Like ordinary economic capital, cultural and social capital can be amassed and invested as well as converted into various other forms. And it is obviously by way of the educational system that cultural and social capital is converted into educational capital, which then can be transformed into other forms of capital, meaning occupational, economic, and social opportunity. According to Bourdieu, this 'conversion' of one form of capital into another is central to the intragenerational or intergenerational reproduction of class differences. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is applicable to the study of extra-curricular activities since different forms of cultural capital, such as knowledge, skills, and interests, can affect which activities students choose to participate in. Students from more privileged backgrounds may have greater access to cultural resources that enable their participation in certain activities, while others may be excluded. Since Bourdieu emphasizes the role of social class in shaping individuals' tastes and preferences, this perspective becomes valuable for the study

of Islamic supplementary education as an extra-curricular activity. Among other things, it helps us understand how access to and participation in such activities more broadly are often structured along social class lines, shedding light on the unequal distribution of the opportunities and resources required to engage in them. Furthermore, through the concept of habitus, we can explore how students' internalized dispositions, shaped by their social and cultural context, influence their choices and experiences of these activities. Bourdieu's theories thereby illuminate how students' social networks, including their family and peer connections, influence their access to extra-curricular activities.

In contrast to Bourdieu's sociology, which addresses the 'mezzo' level of societal life, my research deals with individual students on an ethnographic level. The use of what Behtoui (2017) calls 'extra-familial social capital' constitutes an attempt to bridge these two levels. Behtoui builds on Bourdieu's work but also that of Stanton-Salazar (2001), and explains that extra-familial social capital consists of those resources which are provided by a variety of people beyond pupils' immediate family members, which can be school staff, friends, and other adults and adolescents with whom they are in contact through, for example, organized extra-curricular activities. Behtoui has demonstrated that when involvement in extra-curricular activities such as athletics, cultural, and religious activities:

was associated with positive educational outcomes, participation in less-structured activities was associated with negative effects (in both cases compared to those with no extra-curricular activity involvement). Moreover, no activity at all (relative to less-structured activities) demonstrated a stronger negative association with the educational outcomes. (2019, 352).

He adds,

Even after controlling for respondents' class background, cultural and athletic programmes appear to be more available to students attending schools with the best academic results – often located in affluent areas – than those who attend underachieving schools in cities and towns. The only exceptions were the higher rate of participation in activities put on by religious

organisations in marginalised areas of big cities and the YRCs existing in the less-privileged neighborhoods of small towns, which are likely to be more available to those living in these districts. (Behtoui 2019, 352)

This social capital can thus have a *bridging* or *bonding* effect (Putnam 1993, 2000). Bridging social capital refers to the development of relations and networks with people from *other* environments and backgrounds, people who are *different* from oneself. Bonding social capital then refers to the development of relations and networks with people from *similar* environments and backgrounds who are part of the *same* community. By combining the concept of social capital with Robert Putnam's ideas of bridging and bonding, we get a more comprehensive framework for understanding social dynamics, especially within the context of extra-curricular school activities. Bonding refers to the development of close-knit, homogenous social networks, such as those within a specific club or group. This can be understood in the context of habitus, as students from similar backgrounds may feel more comfortable participating in activities with peers who share their cultural capital. Bonding social capital can promote a sense of belonging and solidarity within these groups. Bridging social capital pertains to connections and networks that reach across different social groups and communities. In the context of extra-curricular activities, you can analyze how certain activities foster bridging by bringing together students from diverse backgrounds. This can provide opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and learning.

Extra-curricular school activities

As already mentioned, it is fairly well established that extra-curricular activities positively affect educational outcomes since they provide sources of social control, together with emotional and personal support. Studies show that students who participate in extra-curricular activities report higher levels of confidence, thus contributing to young people's character development (Blomfield and Barber 2009; Farb and Matjasko 2012; Snellman et al. 2015). Kenneth Bartkus et al. (2012) define extra-curricular activities—whether athletic, cultural, political, or religious—as

those which are external to the core curriculum wherein participation is optional. These activities can be considered a practical aspect of cultural capital (Jæger 2011, 295) as they facilitate the acquisition of cognitive skills, normative values, and cultural norms that align with the formal education system and are subsequently acknowledged and rewarded. Consequently, researchers have suggested that extra-curricular engagement may contribute to the preservation of social differences since it tends to be more prevalent among students from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds (Carolan and Wasserman 2015).

In Sweden, the majority of children and young people take extra-curricular activities outside of school and after school hours (Behtoui 2019), and what is here called Islamic supplementary education, is understood within educational research as one such activity. In Swedish public school, sport is a mandatory school subject, but unlike in other countries, schools do not offer an extra-curricular program *within* the school premises. Instead, parents take their children to sports activities *outside* the school. Religious education is also a mandatory subject in Sweden, but it is a non-confessional school subject that teaches about different religions, not a confessional subject that brings children into a specific worldview such as that provided in Islamic supplementary education (Berglund 2019, 2023). As with sports, if parents want their children to attend confessional teaching *into* a specific worldview, they need to enroll them in this *outside* the mainstream school.¹

Traditionally, extra-curricular activities are organized by adults as members of civil society organizations, but since the 1990s, this type of non-profit civil society provision has declined. Instead, there has been an increase in the number of private actors, and as Lars Svedberg and Lars Trädgård (2007) show, we can see that the gap between the participation rates of young people of different class backgrounds (with education and income as markers) has increased. The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (2014) shows that children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in extra-curricular activities due to the cost of participation (equipment, training camps, membership fees etc.). What is important for our discussion is that the Islamic supplementary education discussed here is, for the most part, free, although in some cases parents were required to pay for teaching materials

¹ An exception to this is of course if parents enroll their children in a religious school. At these schools, non-confessional religious education has to be taught, but confessional religious education can be added as an extra-curricular subject (see, for example, Berglund 2015 or 2019a).

or assist by supplying the children with snacks.

Islam and Islamic Supplementary Education in Sweden

Sweden has a population of about 10 million people. There are no reliable statistics on the number of Muslims in the country; instead, various estimates are used. According to 2016 estimates, the Muslim population in Sweden accounted for 8% of the total population. According to the Pew Research Center, 810,000 people identify as Muslims in some way, and the country will have the largest Muslim population in Europe by 2050, ranging from 11 to 30 percent of the total population depending on migration rates. The vast majority of Muslim children in Sweden attend public school. We know that 27 percent of all students have immigrant parents (Skolverket 2022/2023), but there are no statistics on how many of those are Muslim. In Sweden, religion education² (RE) [*religionskunskap*], is, as already mentioned, a non-denominational subject taught from first grade through to leaving. It is an integrative³ school subject that teaches *about* different religions to all pupils in the same classroom, regardless of their religious or cultural background. This means that if parents want an education that inculcates their children *into* a specific religious world view, they must either enroll their children in a faith-based independent school or in supplementary religious education, which in the Islamic case is sometimes also called mosque education, Qur'an schooling, or Islamic instruction. The reason why I prefer 'Islamic supplementary education' is that the word *education* makes more space for the agency of the student (Berglund 2016). The word *supplementary* is significant as well, because it conveys the notion of an activity that 'adds value'. Supplementary Islamic education, moreover, constitutes a broad category that can reflect a variety of pedagogical outlooks. It is also broad in the sense that its content varies widely from Muslim standards like Qur'an memorization, Islamic history, and Islamic jurisprudence to non-standards, here called co-curricular activities, such as theatre, artistic performance, discussion groups, and lessons designed to improve homework performance.

There are no available statistics on the number of Muslim children and young people participating in Islamic

² In this article the term religion education is used instead of religious education because I find it necessary to distinguish between the different ways that religion is taught in Europe. In other words, the term religion education is a choice made to illustrate the Swedish school subject's officially non-denominational character that is based on a religious studies approach.

³ Integrative is here used for classes where pupils of different religions or no religion are integrated into the same classroom.

supplementary education in Sweden, although somewhat more than 150,000 Muslims belong to some kind of registered Muslim organization (Willander 2019) and many of these provide some kind of Islamic supplementary lessons. These lessons generally take place once a week on a Saturday or Sunday, but sometimes also as an afternoon activity and sometimes twice a week. During holidays, especially summer holidays, some associations organize camps for children that provide more intensive Islamic education combined with excursions and other social activities. What we know is that with well over one hundred established organizations, and around 750 non-profit organizations with Islam or Muslim in their names, Islam has clearly become Sweden's largest non-Christian religion (Sorgenfrei 2018, 223).

Interviews with Young Swedish Muslims

The study's empirical material consists of 20 semi-structured interviews with Swedish Muslim students who at one point or another have participated in supplementary Islamic education in tandem with their mainstream secular schooling. The interviews were conducted in two of Sweden's larger cities, and the interviewees—the majority of whom were contacted through Islamic educational institutions—ranged from 16 to 24 years of age. Over and above the interviews, I personally attended supplementary Islamic educational classes in four different mosques and also had informal conversations with the teachers. The mosques showed great variety. Two of them could be described as national mosques, with a specific nationality dominating both leadership and participants, whereas two were more transnational. In terms of the language used in education, Swedish was the most prevalent since not all pupils understood the dominant language even in the national mosques. They also showed variety in terms of style of pedagogy used to teach the more traditional core of Islamic education, and the amount of time spent on, for example, learning to read, recite, and memorize the Qur'an varied widely.

The main focus of the interviews was on the students' experience of moving between supplementary Islamic education and secular school, with questions regarding the type of knowledge they could take from one setting to the other, but also about the content of supplementary education. A large part of

each interview addressed what has been called the traditional core of Islamic education, that is, learning to read, recite, and memorize the Qur'an. Other aspects of Islamic education that were discussed with the students concerned Islamic history and the Islamic narratives that were often used for teaching *adab* and *akhlaq* (manners and morals). Also mentioned as important by a clear majority of the students were activities such as sports, learning languages, getting help with homework, plus, in one particular case, extra mathematics. It is these co-curricular activities that are at the center of this article and will be discussed below. In the interviews, the students looked *back* on their experience of Islamic supplementary education, reflecting on their experiences in childhood.

When participating in Islamic supplementary education, I conducted formal interviews with teachers and parents but not with pupils because the Swedish ethical vetting committee did not permit interviews with children below the age of 14.⁴ Below I have chosen to include both quotes from interviews and excerpts from my fieldnotes.

Homework help

Doing homework was mentioned as an activity that takes place in some mosques, although enthusiasm for this activity was mixed: "Homework here, homework there, at that time I just wanted to get away from it. I knew homework was important, or at least my mum kept telling me, but I just thought why do it in the mosque?" (16-year-old boy). Homework sessions could be part of the three to four-hour schedule for the weekend or a half-hour to hour session after the more classical Islamic education on weekdays. In these sessions, older teenagers and young adults helped children and younger teenagers with all types of homework. According to some of these young men and women, most of the children who came for the homework sessions had parents whose Swedish was not very good. When I discussed the homework help with the 'imam-teacher' (i.e., the imam in his role as a teacher), he said that some of the adults act as mentors for the young people and play an important role in their educational success; he was especially pleased that he had several university students helping out with the homework assistance, referring to them as role models who demonstrate

4 Note that the larger project also included interviews in England. There, we (myself and Bill Gent) could, according to the British ethical vetting system, also conduct interviews with younger children.

“strong work habits and a sense of civic engagement” (imam-teacher B). Yet homework help, as part of supplementary Islamic education, has been heavily criticized in the Swedish media (Expressen 21-07-13) where it has been claimed that some Islamic organizations have received grants from the Swedish National Agency for Education for homework help, but have instead used the money to spread Islamist propaganda.⁵ At the time of the interviews, I had no information on grants for homework help; nevertheless, here I argue that the homework help that I have studied can be understood in terms of extra-familial bridging social capital, but also in terms of what Putnam (2015, 174) calls ‘soft skills’.

Extra Advanced Mathematics

In one of Sweden’s Shia mosques, I met students who attend the mosque in the weekend, not only for Islamic education but also for mathematics. The children’s parents explained to me that Iran has the best mathematics education in the world and that the level in Swedish schools is too low. The mathematics lessons at the mosque are held in Persian which, at least for the parents, is also a motivation to enroll children, and a mathematics teacher comes to the mosque every weekend to teach more advanced math to the children. The focus in mathematics, according to the parents, is on numerical counting: “what is taught in upper secondary school [*gymnasiet*] in Sweden numerically, is taught in 7th grade in Iran”, a mother tells me. “To learn about Islam, is of course, good, but the lessons in mathematics are also important. We don’t separate, both are knowledge” (Mother A). The mother’s comment can be understood in relation to the Arabic concept of *‘ilm*, which translates as ‘knowledge’. According to Franz Rosenthal, well known scholar of semitic languages, Arabic literature, and Islam, *‘ilm* is the key concept that defines the nature of Muslim civilization itself: “There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude toward ‘knowledge’ as something of supreme value for Muslim beings. *‘Ilm is Islam*” (2007, 2). A lifelong search for knowledge is an ideal of Islamic piety and underlies the concept of Islamic education. The main focus is the cultivation of religious belief although its meaning also

⁵ In 2022, 150 organizations applied for grants from the National Agency for Education, 84 were awarded support. Based on their names, 4 or 5 are possibly Islamic organizations. In Sweden, it is possible for non-profit associations that provide homework help to students in school to apply for financial support from the National Agency for Education. The grant can be used for salary costs for staff who administer the assistance, premises costs, technical equipment, and educational materials, but also snacks. In order for an organization to apply for grants for homework help, it must have no profit motive, not be running a ‘proper school’, be democratically structured, transparently organized, and respect the ideas of democracy, including equality, prohibition of discrimination, and respect for the equal value and rights of all people. It also needs to show its capacity for two years, before applying for the grant. (Skolverket 22-05-06)

incorporates secular disciplines both literary and scientific (Günther 2006).

I did not have the opportunity to take part in the mathematics lessons in the mosque since my focus, at that time, was rather on the more traditional aspects of Islamic education that were going on in parallel; however, the lessons caught my attention, since they were not homework help, but very advanced math. The high status and social capital of math has been acknowledged by several scholars because it is considered to be a factor that leads to well-paid jobs and high social status (Myndigheten för skolutveckling 2004; Lundin 2006). In my previous research, I have shown that in terms of capital, there is an interesting relation between Qur'an memorization and the type of teaching that occurs in subjects such as mathematics. According to the pedagogical guidelines for mathematics in Sweden's national syllabus, "[t]eaching should help pupils to develop their interest in mathematics and confidence in their own ability to use it in different contexts" (Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool, and School-age Educare 2018, 55). This same aim could just as easily apply to the subject of Qur'anic recitation, which is a central Islamic pious practice: that is, to develop an interest in the Qur'an and confidence in one's ability to *use* it in different contexts. These two subjects are also similar in the sense that both are used in different contexts to display knowledgeability and garner social capital (Bourdieu 1996; Lundin 2006). Thus, the ability to recite the Qur'an from memory can be seen to serve not only a theological purpose, but also a variety of personal, social, ceremonial, and cultural purposes. Although actual recitation of the Qur'an is a skill that needs to be hidden in Swedish public schooling, memorizing can be understood as a transferable capital that is beneficial for several school subjects (Berglund 2019b; Berglund and Gent 2018). In terms of mathematics, while the parents sending their children to mosque classes are not content with the level of mathematics education in Sweden, there is no doubt that the school subject is highly valued (Lundin 2006). Paola Valero, when discussing political perspectives in mathematics education, states that "mathematics is not only important in society due to its exceptional, intrinsic characteristics as the purest and most powerful form of abstract thinking but also and foremost, because of its functionality in the constitution of the dominant cultural project of Modernity" (2020, 663).

Teaching the Qur'an and mathematics within the same extra-curricular activity can thus be understood as a reflection of the ambition to use the social capital a bridge between two educational spheres.

Football for team building

Various kinds of sports are visible examples of co-curricular Islamic education. Depending on the space available to the different associations, they can provide children with opportunities to play table tennis or football. Several of the interviewed young Muslims stated that the opportunity to team up with friends after the traditional part of Islamic supplementary classes to play table tennis or football was actually their main motivation for going. One 17-year-old boy says, "I missed playing with my team, but since we had some football there as well, Islamic education was ok. In the summer camps we played a lot. We made teams that we kept through the week". Football was also very visible in some of the mosques that I visited, sometimes in a (for me) very unexpected way.

For most people, playing football in larger groups is connected to the availability of either an outdoor football field, or at least a field, or an indoor sports hall suitable for such an activity. When visiting a Swedish mosque to participate in Islamic education classes and conduct interviews with the imam-teacher as well as meeting with some of the young pupils, I learned that this does not have to be the case, as the following excerpts from the field notes demonstrate:

The class consists of 19 10-12-year-old boys and girls who sit at tables that are put out in a horseshoe formation. The imam-teacher stands in front of the whiteboard talking to them about today's theme, which is compassion. The younger children are taught by the imam's wife in another room. The imam-teacher talks about how to show compassion.

The class is getting restless; a boy asks, without raising his hand, when it is football time. The imam-teacher smiles and says soon. The boy is obviously not content with the answer. I note that the imam-teacher is looking

at his watch. After a couple of minutes, when no one is listening to him any longer, not even me... He pauses and says, now it is time for a break. He opens a cupboard and takes out a soft football and throws it to some of the boys. They catch the ball and run out of the room. I talk to the imam-teacher.

Since it is late December, I reckon that the kids did not run outside, so I ask the imam where they went. He says, follow me. We go up the stairs to the prayer hall of the mosque. I must admit I am horrified by what I see. In the prayer hall, a bunch of boys are playing football. I look at the huge crystal lamp that is hanging down from the cupola. I then look at the imam-teacher who sees that I am horrified.⁶ He smiles and says: where else should they play, the ball is soft so it won't damage the lamp, I like them to feel that they are a team.

(Observation 15-12-23)

Both interviews and observation show that sports activities can be important parts of Islamic supplementary education. For some children and youngsters, they make up an important reason for participating. Sports activity in a mosque setting is, of course, in some ways quite different to that in a sports hall, but it has similarities as a form of bonding social capital. In Sweden, the role of sports in promoting social inclusion and integration is strong and was particularly emphasized by national government agencies following a peak in immigration numbers in 2015 (Fundberg 2017; Ekholm 2019). Integration is not emphasized in discussions with the imam-teacher, however, but rather the bonding effects. This is in line with sports research, where the potential for sports to provide people with bonding social capital is often emphasized (Walseth 2008). Yet Stijn Verhagen and Nanne Boonstra (2014) argue that sports participation can also serve as a springboard for bridging relationships when the social climate encourages mutual and equal social interaction. This is of interest to our discussion on Islamic supplementary education since the Swedish Muslim community is known to be hugely diverse, meaning that potential bridging social capital would be between Muslims of diverse backgrounds rather than in relation to the secular majority society.

6 When reflecting upon this experience later, I realize that my reaction to the football game has more to do with me, than the mosque. In my culturally protestant background, the possibility of playing football in a 'house of worship' does not exist.

Compensatory or not?

Supplementary Islamic education constitutes a broad category that can reflect a variety of pedagogical outlooks. It is also broad in the sense that its content varies widely. It is in some ways similar to other leisure-time, extra-curricular activities such as football, theatre, mathematics, and chess, preoccupations that can add value to (i.e., supplement) a young person's life.

If we now return to the question posed at the beginning of this article: that is, how can Islamic supplementary education as a religious extra-curricular activity be compensatory in relation to mainstream schooling if the students need to hide the fact that they participate? If we take a look at mainstream secular schooling and Islamic supplementary education in the light of Bourdieu's and Behtoui's concepts, these two forms of education can be seen as agencies that variously augment and/or deplete a participant's cultural/educational capital. Habitus is closely related to the concept of capital since habitus is one of the ways that capital exists. Indeed, one way of understanding capital is as 'embodied habitus'—habitus being the result of social experiences, collective memories, and ways of moving and thinking that are inscribed in the individual's body and mind. Every person is by definition equipped with habitus, although habitus often varies between groups, and one person's habitus can be more or less valued than another's (Bourdieu 1996).

Applying all of this to our educational settings, we can see that there is a difference between what counts as cultural/educational capital in each. Within Muslim communities for example, the ability to recognize a quotation from the Qur'an or to place Qur'anic references in appropriate contexts is seen as the mark of a successful education, whereas the mainstream educational community recognizes an entirely different set of success markers, and even tends to question the need for Qur'anic learning altogether. While Islamic supplementary education often needs to be hidden, it has been demonstrated in previous works within the same research project that students themselves emphasize the advantages of participating in supplementary education as well as mainstream schooling to a greater extent than is commonly perceived by the broader society (cf. Berglund and Gent 2019). What emerges is that what may initially appear as two seemingly divergent forms of

education tend to, in practice, synergize, particularly in the lived experiences of individuals who have engaged with both. Emphasized in their narratives are the skills cultivated through the study, memorization, and recitation of the Qur'an, which they themselves claim have exercised a positive influence on their performance in mainstream education. These benefits extend to their capacity to focus on specific tasks, exhibit respectful conduct toward educators, deliver confident presentations, and engage attentively in the learning process. On top of this, my material suggests that there are also co-curricular activities within supplementary Islamic education that are, if not the same, very similar to non-religious extra-curricular activities, and might thereby also have the potential to contribute as some type of social capital.

What has here been understood as co-curricular activities within Islamic education (football, math, homework help) are labelled as extra-curricular in relation to mainstream secular schooling in Sweden. The co-curricular activities take up time outside the traditional core of Islamic education, but they also provide students with opportunities to gain life skills that have the potential to be important for their future success. Through the social capital lens, we can understand that these activities can contribute to relationships with adults and other young people, and pupils can gain access to social networks which afford them valuable resources, important and useful advice, and support for and information about their educational choices and career prospects. A further definite value of those activities in low-income neighborhoods is that they steer young people away from negative social activities.

If we return to the educational and sociological research done on extra-curricular activities, Elisabeth Covay and William Carbonaro (2020) argue that 'non-cognitive skills' such as becoming more independent, being able to follow instructions, working well in a group, fitting in well with peers, and dealing with figures of authority are further consequences of participation in these activities. These skills can also be understood as extra-familial social capital (Behtoui 2017). Just as extra-curricular school activities are essential for students because they allow them to learn about themselves, co-curricular Islamic education activities have the potential to fulfil a similar function. They make it possible for attendees of mosque education to develop interests within a specific space. These

activities are also crucial for students because they allow them to make friends, improve their social skills, and get involved in new activities that might not otherwise be accessible to them. The co-curricular Islamic education activities that I have studied are most clearly a part of Islamic supplementary education. As my analysis shows, these activities have, through both their bridging and bonding social capital, the potential to be part of the compensatory effect that Behtoui claims that supplementary religious education can have. The empirical material for this article is limited, and since research in this field is scarce, I hope that it can inspire others to expand its horizons.

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