Dean&Francis

ISSN 2959-6149

The Impact of Attending After-school Programs on Children's Subjective Well-Being

Baoli Ji[1, *]

[1]School of Economics and Management, Northeast Petroleum University, Daqing, China
*Corresponding author: jibaoli24@outlook.com

Abstract:

Background: With growing awareness among parents regarding the importance of cultivating their children's comprehensive qualities, more and more children are assigned to after-school programs which may occupy children's rest time and entertainment time as well as bring extra pressure to them. However, the impact on subjective well-being resulting from attending after-school programs was often overlooked. Methods: Firstly, 75 children submitted the questionnaires and the statistical data related to after-school programs were collected. Then, the data was analyzed by ANOVA in SPSS. Results: The findings of the present study reveal that attending after-school programs can influence children's subjective well-being, due to three factors: (1) appropriate quantity of after-school programs they attend. (2) If children's extracurricular programs match their interest. (3) If they have autonomy in choosing their extracurricular classes. With the aim of enhancing children's subjective well-being, parents are expected to take these three factors into consideration when choosing extracurricular programs for their children.

Keywords: After-school programs, subjective well-being, children's autonomy, flow.

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of the general miniaturization of family sizes in China, predominantly by one-child or two-child families, parents' investment in their children's education shows a high degree of time, energy and resource inclination, aiming to enhance their comprehensive quality and core competitiveness through systematic cultivation. This educational investment strategy is generally reflected in parents' educational investment, by enrolling their children in one or more after-school tutoring programs. Although after-school tutoring plays a positive role in students' knowledge acquisition, skill development and interest exploration, students' subjective well-being often fails to receive sufficient attention. Parents always sign their children up for after-school classes in order to enhance the competitiveness for further education or follow the trend while ignoring the impact of after-school classes on children's subjective well-be-

ing. Moreover, few scholars have studied the impact of after-school programs on children's subjective well-being. This study aims to systematically explore the influence mechanism of participation in extracurricular courses on students' subjective well-being. In this way, parents can have more decision-making basis for the children's extracurricular education choices based on empirical results and make some contributions to improving students' well-being at the same time. This study examines mechanisms linking after-school participation to life satisfaction (LS). First, the statistical data related to after-school programs is subdivided into several specific aspects and function as dependent variable. Furthermore, as life satisfaction (LS) is considered to be one of the most important factors of subjective well-being (SWB) and the evaluation of life can be defined as a summary assessment of SWB, dependent variable of LS is designed to assess children's sense of subjective well-being [1,2]. At the end, the relationship between the statistical data of after-school programs and the students' SWB is revealed by SPSS.

2. Method

2.1 Research Subjects and Instruments

2.1.1 Research subjects

A simple random sampling method was adopted to randomly select 75 primary school students from an after-school training institution. Parents were contacted via mobile phone to obtain consent, after which the questionnaires were completed by the students. A total of 71 valid questionnaires are retrieved, with a questionnaire effectiveness rate of 94.7%. The students selected age from 7 to 12. Four responses were excluded due to participants being over the age of 13. The final sample included children aged 7 to 12 (mean age = 10.14, SD = 1.467), comprising 46 boys and 25 girls.

2.1.2 Research tools

For Questionnaire on After-school programs for Primary School Students (QAC), this questionnaire is designed by the author. It consists of 7 questions, which investigate key aspects of after-school program participation which may have potential effects in children's satisfaction with life. These include: gender, age, number of extracurricular programs attended, perceived appropriateness of program quantity, alignment between programs and personal interests, degree of autonomy in program selection, and self-reported impact on happiness.

For Brief Multidimensional Students' LS Scale (BMSLSS), this scale was developed by Seligson and Huebner in collaboration and regarded as a valid measure for testing children's LS [3,4]. It was tested to have a good reliability and validity to be used in studies with children [5]. In 2005, Liu Wang adapted the scale for use in the Chinese context, enhancing its cultural appropriateness and applicability [6]. Consequently, BMSLSS is used in this study to evaluate the influence of attending after-school programs on students' LS. This scale comprises six items assessing LS across six domains: family, friends, school, living environment, self, and overall LS [6]. Responses are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale derived from the Delighted-Terrible Scale, ranging from 1 "bad" to 7 "satisfied" [6]. The higher the total score, the higher the student's LS [6]. In this study, the Cronbach's α coefficient of this scale was 0.76 [6].

2.2 Testing Method and Statistical Analysis

SPSS statistical software was used to manage and statistically analyze the obtained data. Given that the QAC items contain categorical variables with three or more response options, one-way ANOVA was employed to examine differences in mean LS scores across groups, the data and information of QAC and BMSLSS was analysed mainly by ANOVA in SPSS. Questions of QAC functioned as independent variables and the dimensions in BMSLSS functioned as dependent variables. ANOVA was used to test if there was any difference among the mean of groups in single item in QAC on the results of dimension in BMSLSS.

3. Results through ANOVA

The results of ANOVA indicate that there are significant differences in the impact on children's LS among different groups in some items of QCA.

As it is shown in Table 1, significant differences were found in children's satisfaction with family life ($p = 0.001$) and self-satisfaction ($p = 0.036$) based on whether students perceived the number of programs they attended as appropriate. However, there is no significant difference among different groups on the overall well-being ($p=0.143$).

Table 1. Relation Between Appropriate Number of Extracurricular Programs and LS

Are the number of these after-school classes suitable for you?	Significance
I would describe my satisfaction with family life as:	0.001

ISSN 2959-6149

I would describe my satisfaction with friendships as:	0.953
I would describe my satisfaction with school as:	0.289
I would describe my satisfaction with where I live as:	0.373
I would describe my satisfaction with myself as:	0.036
I would describe my satisfaction with my overall life as:	0.597
Total	0.143

In Table 2, students whose after-school programs aligned with their interests reported significantly higher overall LS ($p = 0.009$). Significant differences were also found in family satisfaction ($p = 0.006$) and school satisfaction ($p = 0.024$).

Table 2. Relation Between Interest-Activity Fit in Extracurricular Classes and LS

Are all the after-school classes you are taking now the ones you like?	Significance
I would describe my satisfaction with family life as:	0.006
I would describe my satisfaction with friendships as:	0.205
I would describe my satisfaction with school as:	0.024
I would describe my satisfaction with where I live as:	0.384
I would describe my satisfaction with myself as:	0.091
I would describe my satisfaction with my overall life as:	0.125
Total	0.009

In Table 3, when children's opinions were related to choosing extracurricular activities, significant improvements in well-being were observed across nearly all domains. Differences were significant for overall LS ($p < 0.001$), family satisfaction ($p < 0.001$), school satisfaction ($p = 0.043$), living environment satisfaction ($p = 0.028$), and self-satisfaction($p=0.001$).

Table 3. Relation Between Children's Autonomy in Choosing Extracurricular Classes and LS

Will your family respect your ideas when you sign up for after-school classes?	Significance
I would describe my satisfaction with family life as:	<.001
I would describe my satisfaction with friendships as:	0.248
I would describe my satisfaction with school as:	0.043
I would describe my satisfaction with where I live as:	0.028
I would describe my satisfaction with myself as:	0.001
I would describe my satisfaction with my overall life as:	0.002
Total	<0.001

4. Discussion

It is widely believed that the more after-school programs students take, the less happy they will feel. However, different groups do not show any significant difference in the LS, as what is shown in Table 4. The item of "are the number of these after-school programs suitable for you?" is designed to detect if students' subjective feeling about quantity of extracurricular classes influences the perception of LS. Even though it does not show significant difference in the LS, there are significant differences among groups in the term of dimensions of family life and themselves. To some extent, it represents that quantity of extracurricular programs students attend does not have direct impact on the LS. What matters is how many after-school programs children think are appropriate for them. Therefore, parents are expected to make sure the appropriate quantity for their children to improve the children's satisfaction with family life and themselves.

Table 4. Relation Between Number of Extracurricular Classes and LS

How many after-school classes have you attended in total?	Significance
I would describe my satisfaction with family life as:	0.609
I would describe my satisfaction with friendships as:	0.861
I would describe my satisfaction with school as:	0.479
I would describe my satisfaction with where I live as:	0.553
I would describe my satisfaction with myself as:	0.230
I would describe my satisfaction with my overall life as:	0.191
Total	0.535

It is demonstrated in Table 2 that groups in interest-activity fit show significant differences in LS which is in coincide with the concept of flow. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, said that when people were in the state of flow, they were immersed in what they were doing, forgetting about time, fatigue, and everything else except the activity itself [7]. Research on the Principles and Models of Psychology-Moral Education, which is a project of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Ministry of Education, show that when what children study match their interest, it is easier for them to have flow experience [8]. Flow is considered an ultimate state of happiness, representing a deep spiritual experience beyond material levels, and in the context of children's education, it helps sustain engagement and enjoyment [9]. Children who have experience of flow are happier than those who do not [10]. In this regard, when choosing extracurricular programs for children, parents should take their children's interests into consideration to enhance their happiness.

When it comes to the correlation between children's autonomy in choosing extracurricular classes and LS in Table 3, it is neccessary to study the significant importance of students' autonomy in the perception of LS. It is believed in self-determination theory (SDT) that autonomy is the core component of basic psychological needs (BPN) [11,12]. When people meet the demand for autonomy they will feel subjective well-being. By meeting the need for autonomy, children have opportunities for positive growth, which contributes to their happiness. [11,12]. This conclusion can be proved by the strong significance between children's autonomy in choosing extracurricular classes and LS in Table 3 too. Hence, in order to enhance children's sense of well-being, parents should pay more attention to children's autonomy when choosing the after-school programs.

5. Conclusion

This study finds that attending after-school programs can influence children's subjective well-being. First, different child may have different appropriate quantity of after-school programs which will influence children's happiness. Therefore, parents should communicate with their children whether the quantity of after-school programs is appropriate. Secondly, when children's extracurricular programs match their interest, it can be easier for them to enter the state of flow which leads to the sense of well-being. Finally, if children have autonomy in choosing their extracurricular classes makes great differences in attaining happiness. Therefore, in order to enhance children's subjective well-being, parents are expected to take appropriate quantity of after-school programs, children's interest and autonomy into account.

However, this study is insufficient and incomplete to research all the influences of attending extracurricular programs on children's subjective well-being. First of all, there are three dimensions in SWB, but only LS is considered in this study, considering of the patience of primary school students that can be paid to answer the questionnaire. In the future, the influence of the other two factors of SWB, positive affect and a lack of negative affect, should be studied to get a better understanding of SWB. Secondly, children may experience significantly different due to different teaching style of the after-school program teacher, which should be considered in the future study. Thirdly, different programs have distinct characteristics which may influence children's SWB. For instance, programming classes are often attractive to students due to their interactive nature, while art or sports programs may enhance well-being through creativity and physical activity. Therefore, the future study should take the subjects into account in order to have an understanding of the influence of specific subject on SWB. In addition, future studies should consider the long-term impact of after-school projects on students, as well as other psychological factors involved in the mechanism through which these projects affect well-being.

ISSN 2959-6149

References

[1] Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. Psychological Bulletin, 125(2), 276–302.

[2] Diener, E., Heintzelman, S. J., Kushlev, K., Tay, L., Wirtz, D., Lutes, L. D., et al. (2017). Findings all psychologists should know from the new science on subjective well-being. Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 58(2), 87–104.

[3] Abedi, M. R., & Vostanis, P. (2010). Evaluation of quality of life therapy for parents of children with obsessive-compulsive disorders in Iran. European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 19(7), 605–613.

[4] Seligson, J. L., Huebner, E. S., & Valois, R. F. (2005). An investigation of a brief life satisfaction scale with elementary school children. Social Indicators Research, 73(3), 355–374.

[5] Seligson, J. L., & Valois, R. F. (2003). Preliminary validation of the brief multidimensional students' life satisfaction scale (BMSLSS). Social Indicators Research.

[6] Liu, W. (2005). The relationship between primary school students' self-esteem and life satisfaction. Chinese Mental Health Journal, 19(11), 745–749.

[7] Csikszentmihalyi, M., Abuhamdeh, S., & Nakamura, J. (2005). Flow. In A. J. Elliot & C. S. Dweck (Eds.), Handbook of competence and motivation (pp. 598–608). New York: Guilford Press.

[8] Song, Q., & Shen, G. (2018). The value of "flow" in primary school students' learning and its educational countermeasures. Popular Literature and Art, 450(24), 202–203.

[9] Peng, K. (2021). Wu xin ke jian: The surging flow of happiness. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press.

[10] Huber, R. S., Sifers, S. K., Daniels, H., & Young, R. (2012). Teacher support as a moderator of behavioral outcomes for youth exposed to stressful life events. Education Research International, 2012, 1–10.

[11] Vansteenkiste, M., Niemiec, C. P., & Soenens, B. (2010). The development of the five mini-theories of self-determination theory: A historical overview, emerging trends, and future directions. Advances in Motivation and Achievement, 16, 105–166.

[12] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. Psychological Inquiry, 11(4), 227–268.