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## The Impact of After-School Programs on High School Students

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### ABSTRACT

Structured activities called after-school programs (ASPs) provide pupils outside of regular school hours opportunities for academic, recreational, and social development. According to a 2021 American Psychological Association (APA) survey, 67% of high school students reported feeling overwhelmed by too many extracurricular activities, including after-school programs. This paper addresses the findings of studies on the impact of ASPs on family time and emotional well-being, the relationship between participation in after-school programs and academic performance, and peer dynamics.

### Introduction

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021), after-school programs aim to enhance learning, bridge educational disparities, and promote complete development in adolescents and children. From academic tutoring to sports, arts, and skill-building workshops, these programs vary widely.

UNESCO (2021) defines high school students as those enrolled in upper secondary education, often between the ages of 15 and 18 depending on the national education system. Upper secondary education is the final stage of formal schooling before vocational training or higher education. According to the National Education Policy 2020, ninth grade is first year of high school. High school education closes the gap between required education and higher education or entrance into the labor.

First proposed in the late 19th century United States, after-school programs were originally part of settlement house projects to help immigrant children (Halpern, 2002). Eventually, these initiatives turned into structured interventions for academic support and youth participation. Though planned activities can enhance learning, the extra academic performance pressure together with participation in many ASPs could cause exhaustion and lower well-being. Furthermore, the National Sleep Foundation (2020) claims that pupils who spend more than 15 hours per week in after-school activities are twice as likely to suffer sleep deprivation, which affects cognitive capacity and academic performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 History of After school programmes

The paper discusses the evolution, goals, and possibilities of after-school programs, stressing their role in promoting positive youth development and the essential elements for their success.

Describing After-school programs (ASPs) as structured activities provided to students outside of regular school hours, the paper sought to help students' academic, personal, social, and recreational growth. Especially among working parents who cannot be with their children immediately following school, these programs have garnered notable public support. Current ASPs and new possibilities created in various towns have been aided by state, private, and federal funds. In 2002, the federal government allocated \$3.6 billion to after-school programs. Little, P. M. D. et al., 2008

### 2.2 Relation between after-school programmes and Family interaction

Mahoney, J. L., (2006) looked at the relationship between after-school activity participation, stress levels, and family interactions among adolescents using a survey-based data collecting technique under the title Organized activity participation, positive youth development, and the over-scheduling hypothesis. The study emphasized that students in more than three planned after-school activities per week reported higher stress levels (45%) and less family interaction time (40%) compared to their peers.

### 2.3 After-school programmes affects mental health

Luthar, S. S., et al.'s 2012 study showed how high-achieving environments influence students' mental health and emotional well-being by means of psychological assessments combined with a quantitative survey-based approach. Students in elite academic programs gave information on their perfectionist tendencies, anxiety, depression, and stress levels.

Students in academically competitive after-school programs reported 30% more anxiety and sadness than their counterparts in less rigorous environments.

Forty-five percent of students experienced ongoing stress from academic pressures and performance standards.

Those who leaned toward perfectionism were the most vulnerable to mental health issues, experiencing more emotional exhaustion and falling self-esteem over time

### 2.4 Impact of After-school programmes on students from low-income background

Bohnert et al. (2010) looked at how after-school program (ASP) involvement affects low-income background children, especially in relation to academic pressure, unreasonable expectations, and emotional stress.

The study integrated quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews using a mixed-methods approach comprising low-income high school students enrolled in ASPs.

Over half of low-income ASP students reported feeling significant academic pressure from the expectation of using the program as a road to success.

Limited access to other academic assistance and fear of underperformance drove 35% of students to feel more stressed.

Students under too much pressure said their emotional well-being was lower, their self-confidence was weaker, and their anxiety was rising with time.

## 3. Conclusion

Originally intended to enhance education and help children hone their abilities in areas of their interest, after-school programs have become a burden for students, stressing and pressuring them under their weight. After-school programs, which reduce students' self-esteem, emotional well-being, family involvement, and negative mental health consequences, greatly affect those who attend ASPs for more than three days a week.

Though after-school programs provide wonderful opportunities for unforgettable experiences and skill-building, their benefits are diminished when children are overburdened with too many activities or placed in highly competitive and comparative environments. Students should be driven to choose programs they genuinely enjoy instead, so ensuring they have a job that supports their bills as well as one that fulfills their passion and so balancing academic development with personal well-being.

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