

STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL RULES AS OUTCOME OF INVOLVEMENT IN STRUCTURED LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Skolēnu uzvedības un attieksmes pret skolas iekšējās kārtības noteikumiem saistība ar organizētajām ārpusklases nodarbībām

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Abstract. *The aim of the study was to ascertain the associations between students' participation in extracurricular activities, duration and type of these activities and their antisocial behaviour, attitude towards the rules regulating their behaviour at school and students' rights. The sample consisted of 1360 (707 males and 653 females) adolescents between ages of 12 and 17 years. The survey-style assessment questionnaire was used in this study. The research revealed that participation in extracurricular activities was associated with more seldom alcohol use, smoking, deviant behaviour at school, and favourable evaluation of school rules. Duration of extracurricular activities a week was not associated with students' antisocial behaviour. Evaluating substance use and deviant behaviour at school participating in sport students did not differ from those ones who did not participate in any extracurricular activities. Substance use and deviant behaviour at school is less characteristic to those students who attend arts and various activities.*

Keywords: *extracurricular activities, adolescence, antisocial behaviour, school rules.*

Introduction

In the recent years, the interest in studies analyzing the influence of children's leisure activities on their well-being has increased. Within the leisure context, a distinction can be made between the involvement in structured versus unstructured leisure activities (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Structured activities are those that are organized by adults around specific social or behavioural goals. Unstructured activities arise more spontaneously in children's lives, and may include time spent engaged in social interactions with friends or siblings, reading or listening to music alone, or engaging in spontaneous play activities (Fletcher, Nickerson & Wright, 2003). In this study, we will focus on structured leisure activities.

Findings indicate that children who are more involved in club activities receive higher academic grades and are rated by teachers as higher in the academic competence than their peers who are less involved in such activities (Prelow & Loukas, 2003). These students also assess their school and the importance of studying in the future more favourably (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2008). Participation in extracurricular activities may provide positive peer support, positive adult role models and the opportunity to participate in an activity during leisure time, thereby decreasing an adolescent's time to engage in delinquent behaviour (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Although some results suggest that participation in extracurricular activities does not act as a protective factor for

youth engagement in delinquent behaviour (Burton & Marshall, 2005). Researchers found a significant positive correlation between participation in sports and involvement in aggressive behaviour (Burton & Marshall, 2005). Other research data show that adolescent males who participate in organized sports have an increased likelihood of using alcohol (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Michaud, Jeannin & Suris, 2006). Evaluating other drug substance use, it was determined that cannabis use is positively associated with sport activity among male and female students (Michaud, Jeannin & Suris, 2006), while participation in service and religious activities predicted lower rates of drinking and drug use (Eccles et al., 2003). Other researchers revealed the best health-associated rates (for example, absence of bad habits) and more seldom cases of problematic behaviour are characteristic to those students who attend activities of some trends and not of one (Harrison & Narayan, 2003). Researches suggest that increasing hours of extracurricular activities and employment are associated with less sleep, especially among students engaging in more than 5 h a day of these activities (Dorofaeff & Denny, 2006).

To sum up, it can be stated there is still a lack of studies analyzing students who attend a few different activities with attention to the duration of extracurricular activities. The students' attitude towards the rules regulating their behaviour and school rights was also less researched. These issues are relevant as the duty of school is to familiarize students with the rules of social life and develop a need to follow them (Samanci, 2010). Although students are mostly sure adults should take care of them (Rissanen, Kylma & Laukkamen, 2009), the data about problematic students' behaviour, especially their disrespect each other (Delfabbro et al., 2006; Jankauskiene et al., 2008) allow suggesting that students do not tend to follow existing rules and their duties as those of students. This assumption is made as school rules are usually associated with classroom management and school discipline in terms of establishing and maintaining an environment conducive to studying in the classroom as well as order, non-violence, and safety in the playground, corridors, dining hall and so forth at school (Malone & Tietjens 2000). Furthermore, school students are more and more dissatisfied with their schools. Students' clarity and consistency at school rules are significantly associated with the changes of problematic behaviour, either (Way, Reddy & Rhodes, 2007).

This study has an aim to ascertain the associations between students' participation in extracurricular activities, duration and type of these activities and their antisocial behaviour (alcohol, cigarette use, deviant behaviour at school and outside school) as well as their attitude towards the rules regulating their behaviour at school and students' rights. We hypothesize that participation in extracurricular activities, but not time provides a stronger protective effect against antisocial behaviour. We also hypothesize that participation in extracurricular activities would be associated with more positive evaluation of school rules.

Method

Participants. The total sample consisted of 1360 (707 males and 653 females) young adolescents between ages of 12 and 17 years. The sample was drawn from schools representing the main schools, secondary schools and gymnasiums. The respondents were divided into 6 age groups as follows: 12 years: n=251; 13 years: n=226; 14 years: n=256; 15 years: n=209; 16 years: n=215 and 17 years: n=203.

Measures.

Eight antisocial activities were assessed. Two were associated to substance use. Students were asked to report how often they had used each of these substances in the past three months by applying a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (never used) to 6 (several times per day). Analyzing this data, we divided the students into two groups according to alcohol use (never used and used) and smoking (never smoked and smoked). Three items assessed adolescents' deviant behaviour at school. They were asked to report how often they intentionally had damaged something that did not belong to them, hit other students and not attended school without the reason in the past six months. These items were assessed by means of a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (more than four times). According to the answers, we divided the researched students into two groups: without deviant behaviour at school (we classified those students who answered all three questions with the answer variant „not at all“) and with deviant behaviour. The last three assessed adolescents' deviant behaviour outside school. All three items were the same except that adolescents had to report about their behaviour outside school. They were analogically divided into two groups: with and without deviant behaviour outside school.

School rules and students' liberties were assessed by three items. The adolescents were asked to report „*Do you know the regulating rules of your school?*“ by means of a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*I do not know anything about such rules*) to 4 (*I know them very well*). According to the answers, the students were divided into two groups: those who knew the rules very well and those who had just familiarized with them or did not know anything about them. The adolescents were also asked to report „*Are the students' behaviour regulating rules fair?*“ by means of a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*they are not fair at all*) to 4 (*they are completely fair*). According to the answers, the students were divided into two groups: those who thought these rules were completely fair and those who doubted in their fairness. The third item assessed the adolescents' judgement about students' liberties. They were asked to report „*How do you assess the students' rights at school?*“ this item was assessed by means of a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*the students have too many rights*) to 4 (*the students hardly have any rights*). According to the answers, the students were divided into two groups: those who thought the students had enough rights at school and those who thought they had too many or too few rights.

Participation of students in extracurricular activities. The adolescents were given a detailed list of activities and were asked to check all of the activities they participated in. These activities were divided into 4 categories: sports-only activities, arts activities, technical activities, and the last – various activities (participating in more than one activity). Analyzing the data, the students were first divided into the groups of participating and non-participating in extracurricular activities. Then the participating students were divided into four groups according to the type of extracurricular activities and compared with non-participating ones. Asking the students about their participation in extracurricular activities, they were also asked to indicate how much time they spent on them a week. According to the average time of extracurricular activities, we divided the researched into two groups: those who spent up to three hours per week for extracurricular activities and those who spent on them more time.

Data analysis. All analyses were conducted with SPSS 13.0. The differences between the groups were calculated using chi-square at a level of 0.05. The logistic regression analysis was undertaken in order to investigate the association between the dependent variables (antisocial behaviour, school rules and students' liberties) and the independent variables (participation in extracurricular activities, time of participation per week, and type of activities). The results are expressed as adjusted odd ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (95%CI).

Results

The study results show 64.9% students participate in extracurricular activities. The students mostly choose sport (41.2%) and art activities less often (20.7%). One third of them (34.7%) even attend a few activities simultaneously. It was determined 56.7% students used alcohol at least once in the last three months. Most of them used alcohol once or twice a month (38.3%). Accordingly, 25.8% smoked at least once in the last three months. It was determined that 60.5% students had deviant behaviour at school meanwhile 35.8% had such kind of behaviour outside school. It was determined there were more girls who had never used alcohol ($\chi^2=12.07$, $p<0.001$) and never smoked ($\chi^2=27.09$, $p<0.001$). Girls had deviant behaviour at school ($\chi^2=80.82$, $p<0.001$) and outside it less often ($\chi^2=123.47$, $p<0.001$). The survey showed that alcohol use ($\chi^2=241.55$, $p<0.001$), smoking ($\chi^2=122.29$, $p<0.001$) and deviant behaviour at school ($\chi^2=90.5$, $p<0.001$) was more characteristic to older students. Meanwhile, deviant behaviour outside school was more frequent among younger students ($\chi^2=18.22$, $p<0.001$).

It was determined 71.2% students had read the rules regulating their behaviour at school, 43.0% indicated they were completely fair. 74.1% students thought they had enough rights at school. The research showed the girls knew the students' behaviour rules better ($\chi^2=21.74$, $p<0.001$), more of them believed in fairness of the rules ($\chi^2=21.38$, $p<0.001$) and thought the students had enough rights ($\chi^2=32.88$, $p<0.001$). Older students agreed less often that the rules regulating their behaviour at school were completely fair ($\chi^2=9.24$, $p<0.01$).

Table 1

Bivariate analyses showing the behavioural and attitudinal correlations with participation in extracurricular activities and time

Variables	Participation in extracurricular activity			Participation time per week		
	Involved (n=883)	Not involved (n=447)	OR (95%CI)	> 3 hours per week (n=483)	≤ 3 hours per week (n=400)	OR (95%CI)
Substance use						
Never drunk alcohol	45.5	39.2*	1.30 (1.03-1.63)	44.0	47.1	1.13 (0.87-1.48)
Never smoke	77.0	68.9***	1.51 (1.18-1.94)	74.6	79.8	1.34 (0.98-1.84)
Deviant behaviour						
No deviant behaviour at school	42.5	34.1**	1.43 (1.13-1.80)	42.3	42.9	1.03 (0.78-1.34)
No deviant behaviour outside school	64.4	63.7	1.03 (0.82-1.30)	63.8	65.2	1.06 (0.80-1.40)
School rules and liberties						
Knows school rules	71.0	71.7	1.03 (0.81-1.33)	68.1	74.6*	0.73 (0.54-0.98)
School rules are fair	46.8	35.9***	0.64 (0.51-0.80)	42.7	51.8**	0.70 (0.53-0.91)
Students have enough rights	75.9	70.6*	0.76 (0.59-0.98)	74.9	77.3	0.88 (0.64-1.20)

*p<0,05; **-p<0,01; ***-p<0,001

Table 2

Bivariate analyses showing the behavioural and attitudinal correlations with the type of extracurricular activities

Variables	Type of extracurricular activities (n=853)					
	Sports only (n=364)	OR (95%CI)	Arts only (n=183)	OR (95%CI)	Various activities (n=306)	OR (95%CI)
Substance use						
Never drunk alcohol	37.5	0.93 (0.70-1.13)	49.7**	1.53 (1.09-2.16)	52.0***	1.68 (1.26-2.24)
Never smoke	67.4	0.93 (0.70-1.250)	87.4***	3.12 (1.93-5.03)	81.7***	2.01 (1.42-2.86)
Deviant behaviour variables						
No deviant behaviour at school	30.7	0.86 (0.64-1.15)	60.1***	2.91 (2.05-4.14)	45.9***	1.64 (1.22-2.20)
No deviant behaviour outside school	53.7**	0.66 (0.50-0.87)	77.0***	1.91 (1.29-2.83)	68.8	1.25 (0.92-1.70)
School rules and liberties						
Knows school rules	65.3*	1.35 (1.01-1.81)	73.2	0.93 (0.63-1.36)	75.8	0.81 (0.58-1.12)
School rules are fair	40.6	0.82 (0.62-1.09)	51.6***	0.53 (0.37-0.74)	50.3***	0.55 (0.41-0.74)
Students have enough rights	70.2	1.02 (0.76-1.38)	82.4**	0.51 (0.33-0.79)	79.4**	0.62 (0.44-0.88)

Note. Compare with not involved in extracurricular activity group

*p<0,05; **-p<0,01; ***-p<0,001

The data presented in the first table shows the students who do not participate in extracurricular activities use alcohol more often ($\chi^2=5.02$, $p<0.05$) and they smoke more often ($\chi^2=10.61$, $p<0.001$). Participation in extracurricular activities has a significant influence on more seldom cases of deviant behaviour at school ($\chi^2=9.05$, $p<0.01$). However, participation in extracurricular activities and their duration are not associated with students' deviant behaviour outside school. The research showed participation in extracurricular activities was positively associated with more favourable students' behaviour towards the school rules, but not the time spent on them per week. The students participating in extracurricular activities indicated more often these rules were fair ($\chi^2=14.96$, $p<0.001$). Meanwhile, those who spent there more time believed in their fairness less often ($\chi^2=7.11$, $p<0.01$). The research revealed the associations of participation in extracurricular activities with more favourable evaluation of their rights ($\chi^2=4.50$, $p<0.05$)

Analyzing the association of variables of the students' behaviour and attitude with the type of extracurricular activities, the data of the students participating in sports, arts and various activities was compared with that of the students who do not participate in extracurricular activities (Table 2)(as there were few students from technical activities ($n=30$), the data of this group was not analyzed). It was determined that attending of sports activities was not associated with the students' alcohol use and smoking. Sport was not associated with deviant behaviour at school, but it was associated with more frequent cases of such behaviour outside school ($\chi^2=8.57$, $p<0.01$). The research showed that participating in sport students knew the school rules less often ($\chi^2=3.96$, $p<0.05$). The research revealed positive associations between participation of students in arts activities and less seldom cases of alcohol use, smoking and problematic behaviour at school and outside it (Table 2). Moreover, the students attending various activities evaluated the school rules and students' rights more favourably. Attending of various activities compared with those students who did not participate in any extracurricular activities was associated with less seldom cases of alcohol use, smoking and deviant behaviour at school. Those students who participated in various activities evaluated the school rules more favourably and spoke for their rights at school more favourably.

Discussion

At the beginning of the research, it was expected that participation in extracurricular activities would be associated with more seldom cases of antisocial behaviour. The research partially confirmed the raised hypothesis as the associations between the students' participation in extracurricular activities and more seldom alcohol use and smoking as well as involvement in deviant behaviour at school were determined. The differences in evaluation of deviant behaviour at school among the analyzed students may have been determined by a few factors. First, attention should be paid that the students of schools of small towns were surveyed; most of them may have chosen informal activities performed in the same school and organized by the same teachers. Their trust and respect to each other can

affect a more favourable attitude towards studying and school, i.e., it can encourage the study motivation. The works of other scientists also suggest extracurricular activities encourage a more favourable students' attitude towards school and the importance of studying (Eccles et al., 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2008). Thus, a higher motivation of studying discourage being absent from school and a more favourable attitude towards school analogically encourages saving its property. However, participation in extracurricular activities does not necessarily act as a factor protecting from problematic behaviour outside school. Attention is also paid to it by other scientists analyzing subcultures of adolescents' leisure time suggest adults' supervision is very important as well as behaviour of their activity friends (Thorlindsson, Bernburg, 2006).

Evaluating the data of the students' attitude towards the behaviour rules and their rights at school, it can be stated the second hypothesis raised at the beginning of the research was partially confirmed. Although most students knew the school rules regulating their behaviour, those participating in extracurricular activities evaluated them more favourably. Besides, more of these students thought they had enough rights at school. It is to note adolescents usually have a negative attitude towards different rules restricting their behaviour. Thus, a more favourable attitude towards the behaviour rules expressed by the students participating in extracurricular activities can be affected by the nurturance of a more favourable attitude towards studying and school and observance of the rules in cooperation in their favourite activities. It is to note extracurricular activities can encourage a more favourable students' attitude towards the school culture and personal participation in its creation. A positive school culture is one in which teachers and students care about and support one another, share values, norms, goals, and a sense of belonging, and participate in and influence group decisions (Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007). School culture is an important contextual variable influencing students' adjustment to school. School culture is associated to student disciplinary problems and achievements; it could foster prosocial behaviour of childrens (Barr & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2007). If students participating in extracurricular activities learn to cooperate with their peers and adults and participate in making common decisions, it can explain a more favourable attitude of these students towards the rules regulating their behaviour as well as the students' rights.

The results of this survey confirmed the assumption made at the beginning of the research that the duration of extracurricular activities did not have any influence on the students' behaviour. However, the associations between the time spent on extracurricular activities per week and the students' attitude towards the behaviour rules were determined. It is to note the students spending more time on various activities evaluate the rules regulating their behaviour more favourably. It enables stating the contents of extracurricular activities are more important for their positive influence on children compared with time. In this context, attention should be also paid to the type of extracurricular activities as it is associated with the students' behaviour according to the data of this research. The research revealed

that alcohol use and smoking was less characteristic to those students who participated in arts or various activities. Besides, antisocial behaviour at school was also less characteristic to the students participating in arts activities. However, there was no difference in this behaviour between the students who do not participate in extracurricular activities and those who go in for sports. It enables stating that sport does not necessarily distract students from health-damaging behaviour. It is to note it partially repeats the correlation of previous studies between sport and alcohol use (Eccles et al., 2003; Michaud, Jeannin & Suris, 2006).

According to the data of our study, sport does not protect students from smoking and it does not coincide with the results of other scientists determining negative correlations between sport and smoking (Harrison & Narayan, 2003). The discrepancy between these results may have been influenced by a few reasons. In our study, we did not consider such factors as the students' sport mastership and cultivated kind of sport which can affect their behaviour. Some studies suggest smoking is more characteristic to people choosing individual kinds of sport and sportswomen of higher mastership (Piretti-Watel et al., 2002).

It was determined the involvement in deviant behaviour outside school was only negatively associated with attending of arts activities. There was no difference between the students attending various activities and those who did not participate in any extracurricular activities. It may have been influenced by the fact these students may have attended sports activities, too. Evaluating the behaviour outside school it was determined the sport students were involved in it more often compared with the students attending other extracurricular activities and those who did not participate in any leisure activities organized by adults. This data partially repeats the statements of other authors that attending of a kind of sport does not necessarily protect students from their involvement in delinquent behaviour (Burton, Marshall, 2005).

Conclusion

The research revealed that participation in extracurricular activities was associated with more seldom alcohol use and smoking. However, there are no associations between participation in extracurricular activities and deviant behaviour outside school. Evaluating the attitude towards the students' school rules, it was determined those students who participated in extracurricular activities evaluated them more favourably. Duration of extracurricular activities a week was not associated with antisocial behaviour. Evaluating substance use and deviant behaviour at school participating in sport students did not differ from those ones who did not participate in any extracurricular activities. Substance use and deviant behaviour at school is less characteristic to those students who attend arts and various activities.

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