

EXTRACURRICULAR APPROACHES TO INFLUENCE THE WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: *This article examines the influence of extracurricular activities on the well-being of primary school children, using the Well-Being Index (WBI) to measure levels of well-being before and after participating in these activities. The results suggest that engaging in extracurricular activities can have a significantly positive impact on children's overall well-being, helping to increase their sense of connection, competence and autonomy.*

Key words: *extracurricular activities; well-being; primary school children; Well-Being Index; personal development.*

Theoretical foundation

Children's well-being in the school context has become a growing topic of interest in the literature (Lippman et al., 2009). The concept of well-being is multidimensional and encompasses physical, emotional, social, and cognitive aspects (Pollard & Lee, 2003).

Extracurricular activities are an essential component in children's overall development, providing them with opportunities to develop social, emotional and cognitive skills outside the formal context of education (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Participation in these activities has been associated with multiple benefits, including increased self-esteem, development of positive relationships with peers, and improved academic outcomes (Mahoney et al., 2005).

Well-being measures such as the Well-Being Index (WBI) have been used to assess how different experiences, including extracurricular activities, influence children's well-being (Seligson et al., 2013). These

tools provide a detailed picture of the impact of various activities on children's physical, emotional and social well-being.

Over time, education and learning have been viewed beyond the strict framework of classical instruction. Thus, extracurricular activities began to be seen as an essential way to complement the school experience (Larson, 2000). These activities provide opportunities for children to explore and develop passions, competencies, and skills not necessarily covered in the standard program (Durlak et al., 2010).

Moreover, a vital aspect of extracurricular activities is that they allow children to experiment and engage in activities in a less formalized and often more cooperative environment. It promotes autonomy, self-confidence and the development of essential life skills such as teamwork, communication and problem solving (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

In addition to these benefits, there is empirical evidence to suggest that participating in extracurricular activities can have positive effects on children's mental and emotional well-being. An increased sense of belonging, connection with peers, and social validation are just some of the emotional benefits associated with such participation (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

In the digital age and with increasing sedentariness among young people, extracurricular activities, especially physical ones, can play a crucial role in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle (Strong et al., 2005).

In conclusion, understanding and assessing the impact of extracurricular activities on children's well-being is essential to maximise benefits and ensure that all children have access to opportunities that support their integral development.

Research:

For this research, we used the Well-Being Index (WBI) questionnaire to assess children's well-being. WBI is a validated and reliable tool widely used in child welfare research. The children completed the WBI questionnaire at two different times: before starting extracurricular activities and after three months of active participation. This allowed us to assess the direct impact of these activities on their well-being.

The sample consisted of 100 children from Arad County, aged between 7 and 12 years. All children participated in various workshops:

1. Mindfulness and relaxation workshop: This workshop introduced children to the concept of mindfulness and helped them focus on the present. They learned different breathing techniques, participated in guided meditation exercises, and created their own "calm jars" of glitter to help them calm down when agitated.

2. Creative journaling workshop: Children were encouraged to write down their thoughts, feelings and hopes in a journal. They learned how to express their emotions through writing and drawing, and participate in exercises that help them recognize their strengths and develop self-confidence.

3. Nature connection workshop: Connecting with nature has been linked to better mental and physical well-being. Children participated in nature walks, created art from natural objects and learned about the importance of the environment.

4. Gardening workshop: Given the physical and mental benefits of gardening, the children planted and cared for their own plants. Through this, they developed patience, responsibility and appreciation for nature.

5. Communication and teamwork workshop: This workshop focused on developing children's social skills. Through games and activities, children learned the importance of listening, sharing, and cooperating with others.

Hypothesis and results:

Analyzing WBI scores before and after participating in extracurricular activities for a sample of 100 children, a significant improvement in overall well-being is observed. The results obtained are presented in the tables below.

Statistics	Scor WBI
Medium	3.5
Median	3.5
Standard deviation	0.25
Minimum	3.0

Maxim	4.0
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Table 1: Summary of WBI scores before participating in extracurricular activities

Before participation, the children's average WBI score was 3.5, with a standard deviation of 0.25. This indicates that, in general, children had a moderate perception of their own well-being. The minimum value was 3.0 and the maximum value was 4.0, showing relatively little variation in responses.

Statistics	Scor WBI
Medium	5.3
Median	5.3
Standard deviation	0.2
Minimum	5.0
Maxim	5.7

Table 2: Summary of WBI scores after participation in extracurricular activities

After participation, the average WBI score increased significantly, reaching 5.3, with a standard deviation of 0.2. This suggests that extracurricular activities had a positive impact on children's perception of well-being. Responses ranged from 5.0 to 5.7, indicating an overall increase in satisfaction and well-being among children.

Comparing these two datasets, it is obvious that extracurricular activities positively influenced children's well-being. The median, which represents the median value of the dataset, remained constant (3.5 before and 5.3 after), confirming that most children felt an improvement in their well-being.

In conclusion, the results suggest that extracurricular activities have a positive impact on children's well-being, promoting a better perception of their general condition and quality of life.

Conclusions:

In light of the data collected and analysed, it is clear that extracurricular activities have a significant impact on children's well-being. Children who participated in such activities showed a noticeable improvement in their perception of their own well-being, compared to their baseline state, before engaging in these activities.

Extracurricular activities not only provide children with an environment in which they can explore and develop diverse skills and passions, but, as this research suggests, they also contribute significantly to increased emotional and psychological well-being. Feeling belonging, increasing self-confidence, developing social skills and validation through peers are just some of the benefits associated with participating in extracurricular activities.

The results of this research highlight the importance of providing and promoting extracurricular activities within schools and communities, not only as a means of developing skills, but also as a vital tool to support children's overall wellbeing.

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