

Urban Elementary School Students' Participation in the After-School Program: The Role of Parental Priorities, Perceptions and Socioeconomic Status

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Received: August 9, 2023; received in revised form: September 29, 2024;
accepted: October 1, 2024

Abstract:

Introduction: During after-school hours, children and young people, especially those in the middle class, often occupy themselves with playtime or some sort of social activity. Thus, the main concerns of the study are the involvement of after-school programme attendance, the implementation of after-school programs, and the relationship of this situation with the socio-economic status of the family.

Methods: A two-part questionnaire was used to ask the parents their personal demographic information and information relating to their choices, opinions, and preferences regarding after-school programs to achieve the purpose of the study.

Results: The estimates of students' academic achievement for the grade levels assessed were predominantly above average or higher (n=404; 74.4%). Also, the parent's expectations for their children's success were high (n=131; 24.1% near average and n=8; 1.5% at a below-average level).

Discussion: This study examined the factors influencing the participation of fourth-grade elementary school students in after-school programmes, as well as the effect the students' families' socio-economic and cultural status has on the parents' opinions and preferences regarding after-school programs and the participation of their children.

Limitations: The preferences and explanations of 543 parents do not allow the generalization of the results to the whole population.

Conclusions: The results show a strong positive correlation between the socioeconomic income level and the after-school participation.

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Key words: after-school programmes, parental priorities socio economic status, parental perceptions, urban elementary school students.

Introduction

The involvement of after-school attendance, the implementation of after-school programmes and the relationship of this situation with the socio-economic status of the family are the main concerns of the study. During after-school hours, children and young people, especially those in the middle-class, often occupy themselves with play-time or some sort of social activity. In this case, many children eventually attend some type of after-school care programme which has been designed to keep the children active, safe and occupied for some extent of time (Belle, 1999). But this attendance is not the same for every child at each socio-economic level. The socioeconomic status of families has been one of the most commonly referred predictors of children's participation of after school activities (see Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2009; Cheung, 2017; Chin & Phillips, 2004).

Research has shown that high-quality out-of-school time [OST] programmes can have a measurable impact on the academic success and well-being of students; so as a result, these programmes have been increasingly relied upon as a key strategy in closing the achievement gap and improving the level of low-performing schools (Fashola, 1998; Little & Harris, 2003; Gunderson, 2012; Johnston, EPI.). Participation in organized school and community-based activities, such as school clubs, sports, and youth development programmes, is related to indicators of positive development such as greater academic achievement (Johnston, 2008; Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999), educational attainment, occupational status, self-esteem, socio-emotional adjustment, and reliance (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010; Massoni, 2011; Fredricks & Simpkins, 2013). At least they may play a protective role by helping to prevent a loss of school engagement even if it doesn't result in higher levels of functioning (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004).

Most of the research has focused on the academic outcomes of participation (Fashola, 1998; Little & Harris, 2003). There is strong evidence that involvement in after school programmes for low-income and ethnic minority youth is related to psychological and social adjustment, which is predictive of youths' academic success (Lauer et al., 2006; Mahoney et al., 2007; Shernoff, 2010). Participation has been linked to higher self-esteem, social behaviours, and peer acceptance, as well as reduced negative behaviours, like aggression and drug use (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Mason & Chuang, 2001; Morrison et al., 2000). Although much literature (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Lauer et al., 2006; Redd et al. 2002)

indicates that youth participation in after school programmes increases academic and developmental gains, the majority of studies do not find that the programme participants show higher academic performance than non-participants (Granger, 2008; as cited in Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010).

The task of providing a well-rounded education and meeting the needs of all students is an extraordinary challenge. This may be even more valid today than in the past because of the continued decrease in necessary resources, as well as the increases made to teacher and school accountability.

The focus of this study looks at the factors associated with child participation in afterschool programmes according to their socioeconomic status and their parents' approaches to the programme activities, as having knowledge about participation is required for planning intervention and to promote benefit from after-school education. Socioeconomic status is not just a demographic factor, as Stockie (2009) argued, it is also linked to parental influence in terms of access, time and awareness of child participation to the programs, such as physical activity (Cheung, 2017). Therefore, the parents' opinions about the quality of after-school education programmes can be helpful for their choices about which activities they should send their children.

According to eco-developmental theory, granted in this study, how children's activity participation fits within the family system should be cared for by the research because it also emphasizes the role of cultural values and practices (Szapocznik & Coatswork, 1999). Family's cultural structure could be decisive for children and adolescents' decisions about how to spend their time use after school. The data obtained is important to figure out whether parents see that organized after-school activities are influential to promote the positive development of children. Consequently, this research will complement the existing studies on parents' ideas about after school educational activities.

The reasons for low participation levels of economically disadvantaged children and youth are not clear because the numbers cannot reflect if this is due to a lack of programming in low socioeconomic areas, or whether there are larger social and economic factors at work outside of the control of the school system. However, according to the survey results in Duffey and Johnson's (2002) study are taken into consideration the lack of parental satisfaction is a reason for lower participation in the underprivileged areas because of associating with a lack of transportation, events, and programmes.

However, the need to allocate a certain budget for participation in activities has the potential to adversely affect the participation of children of low-income families. Therefore, the participation of children living in these areas in after-school activities is important.

After-school training is effective in resolving inequalities in the living conditions of children and young people at low socioeconomic levels living in poor areas

with the activities in their content. However, the need to allocate a certain budget for participation in activities has the potential to adversely affect the participation of children of low-income families. For example, transportation requires parents to spend extra money to use these programmes. In this case, parents will not choose to send their children to after-school activities in places far from their homes. As such, the socio-economic status of the participating parents, including educational levels and income, was taken into consideration in their answers.

In this study, it was important to enquire the current state of after-school programmes in our region, as well as to obtain a representative cross-section sample of the socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds of population in question. In order to accomplish the research aims, a cross-section of participants from the appropriate socioeconomic, cultural, and educational groups was selected from a total of seven urban schools all located in the city center.

1 Literature review

In recent years the research focus around after school programmes, in particular, has been placed on the developmental consequences of OST participation and also better understanding a variety of aspects of these developmental consequences. These include; (a) concerns regarding the role such activities might play in promoting school achievement and preventing problems related to school disengagement, (b) the continuing social class and ethnic group disparities in school achievement, (c) concerns about the preparation of youth for an increasingly technical and demanding labor market, and (d) the amount of unsupervised time experienced by many youth in the modern era (Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2005).

Past research has shown a positive correlation between after-school programme attendance, positive attitude development, school performance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007) and academic achievement (Perry, Teague, & Frey, 2002). In addition, through community and parental involvement after-school enrichment programmes have proven to be an effective avenue for strengthening academic performance in areas such as English language learning (Téllez & Waxman, 2010) and mathematics and language courses (Meyer & Van Klaveren, 2013).

Children from low-income families are often more likely to need an increased number of educational opportunities during their out-of-school time and are more likely to benefit from these OST opportunities (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias, 2001; Miller, 2003). But this situation sometimes would change to gender. For example, children from a lower SES background have been reported to engage in lower levels of vigorous Physical Activity, and low SES girls in particular have been reported to be least active when compared to high SES girls and low SES boys (Inchley et al., 2005).

When the existing research regarding out-of-school time programmes and related activities that had taken place in Turkey were investigated, it was determined that satisfactory studies, in terms of applications and socio-cultural distribution, did not exist. The most important issue is that the delimited evaluation scope of after-school education programmes by just the evaluation of students' leisure time and free activity courses in urban schools.

In the present study, we looked at the related studies with after school programmes and the parents' views about children's participation to them. Excluding participation, we examined what parents think about the quality and the developmental outcomes of after school programmes. In addition, we attempted to discern how the goals and aspirations that parents have about their children's development are lived out in the daily routines.

In light of a review of past research findings, this study intended to better determine parents' thoughts regarding after-school programmes, which variables influenced their thoughts, and if parents' thoughts varied according to their socio-economic and cultural status. The reason for including parents' views is the important effect of parental involvement on children's education in regard to specific aspects of social functioning and emotional development (O'Kane, 2007).

According to Bourdieu's (1986; 1992) theory of social reproduction, family social class is reproduced over many generations through various cultural and social resources and practices. In this process, cultural norms, social habits, essential learning orientations, influential cultural norms, values, and attitudes, as well as parenting styles, etc., all play crucial roles. It also argues to be capable of explaining persistent inequalities in educational stratification (Tzanakis, 2011). The qualities parents wish to instill in their children and the hopes and aspirations parents have for their school-age children are linked to parents' perceptions of children's after-school activities (Dunn et al., 2003).

2 Theoretical background

Parents play an active role in the organized after-school activities via selecting the places and the activities that their children would attend. In order to better ascertain the prevalence of after-school programme attendance among elementary school children; this study utilized the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's eco-developmental theory which is an extended version of his ecological theory. According to eco-developmental theory, children are inside multiple nested settings, such as organized activities and families are particularly important because they influence children's involvement in organized activities. Families' features, such as cultural norms, immigration and ethnicity affect various settings to shape development (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012).

This study is based on Bronfenbrenner's eco-developmental theory as our interest is better understanding the content of the children's environment, their families over the period of their maturation and better understanding the effect of participation in after-school activities on their emotional, physical, and social development. According to Bronfenbrenner (1993), the ecosystem that surrounds a person is comprised of linkages and processes, which take place between the various settings in which the person interacts during their life. Steinberg, et al. (1994) points out that specific attention can be placed on the parenting practices of children's parents. This is important because some parents are able to build collaborative relationships via cultural cohesion, while others may deviate from the ecological theory for a variety of reasons including failed marriages or partnerships (Leonard, 2011).

This study was designed to better understand parents' ideas regarding attendance in and the implementation of after-school programmes for their elementary school-age children in urban area. It was also an ecological study, which examined the preferences of children ranging between nine to 11 years old regarding their activities and use of out-of-school time, because conceptualizing after-school programmes participation from an ecological perspective requires that multiple aspects of the after-school ecology be considered (Vandell & Posner, 1999; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005).

3 Purpose of the study

After-school programmes cater to the needs of the participating students and in particular address the needs of the most socio-economically disadvantaged children. For this reason, preparation of after-school programmes should vary according to the socio-economic and cultural levels of students as well as ample effort should be taken to persuade children from disadvantaged families to participate in these programmes. Socio-economic status was regarded as an important factor, because of its possible link to disparities in physical activity opportunities (Sallis et al., 2000) and other after-school activities for children.

The study aims to reveal the experiences, expectations, and opinions of the parents of students attending elementary urban schools as they related to after-school programmes. In countries struggling to thrive in the education field like Turkey, there is a need for strengthening after school education besides formal school education and the parents' perspective is quite important in fulfilling this requirement. In the same vein, this study provides the opportunity to better understand the thoughts and preferences of participating parents regarding the preparation and implementation of after-school programmes for their children in relation to socio-economic status.

The first hypothesis in the study was that the most important variable in determining the families' opinions and preferences regarding after-school

programmes is their socio-economic status. The second hypothesis that the expectation of academic success is inversely proportional to the level of participation in after-school programmes has been established in connection with the expectations of parents and the priority placed on their children's education. And the null hypothesis in the study is that there is no relation between the expectation of academic success and the level of participation in after-school programmes.

4 Method

The study used a cross-sectional, self-report survey design to examine the factors affecting the participation of children in after-school programmes and the relations among them such as parental SES and children's participation. A descriptive methodology was also utilized in order to better obtain the necessary information for effectively evaluating the qualities of students participating in after-school activities; in particular, as these qualities related to sociological meaning and perspective.

4.1 Participants

We examined our participants' perceptions about their living conditions and their view of after-school activities the SES, in order to test our assumption regarding the socioeconomic status of the families (n=543). Our data indicate that more than one-third of all participant parents combined (35%) were clustered into either the lower income group (14.9%) or lower- middle- income group (20.6%). While, almost the same number were clustered in the middle-income group (37.9%), one quarter was the upper-middle income group (25%), and a small number of the remaining parents were in the top income group (1.5%). A questionnaire including personal information and questions about after-school activities was distributed to the parents of 543 students attending seven schools. The urban schools taken as the sample universe in the study were preferred among the public schools. 303 of these students are girls (55.8%), and 240 are boys (45.2%). The students' age varies between nine (3.3%) and eleven (11.4%). The maximum age range of 85.3% was in the distribution (10-year-old). The family structure of the participating students is illustrated in Table 1.

One of the important factors that play a role in this choice is that private school parents pay extra fee to schools for after-school activities and courses. The survey was conducted with the parents of fourth grade students. The rationale for querying the parents of fourth graders was they were more acutely aware of their preferences and the positives and negatives of after-school programmes because of their time in the system.

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Table 1

Status of the family unit

Family unit status	n	%
Parents live together	490	90.20
Mother is deceased/Father is deceased	6	1.10
Parents are apart, I live with my parents	41	7.60
Mother and father are separate, I live with my father	3	0.55
Mother and father are separate; child lives with a grandparent or with a family that the SGK or an institution has arranged	3	0.55
Total	543	100.00

Looking at the data reflected in Table 1, a majority of the parents who participated in the study were found to have a cohesive family unit (n=490; 90.2%). While the ratio of families lost one of the parents is 1.1% (n=6), of the apart living, is 8.10% (n=44), others live with a family provided by the provincial directorate of family and social policies or with grandparents (n=3; 0.6%). In connection with this family structure, we looked at whether the child's educational preferences were influenced by their parent's educational levels (see Table 2).

Table 2

Parents' educational levels

<u>Education level (Mother)</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Education level (Father)</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Illiterate	10	1.8	Illiterate	1	0.2
Literate	6	1.1	Literate	4	0.7
Primary school graduate	81	33.3	Primary school graduate	150	27.6
Secondary school graduate	68	12.5	Secondary school graduate	72	13.3
High school graduate	138	25.4	High school graduate	108	19.9
Vocational high school graduate	14	2.6	Vocational high school graduate	18	3.3
University graduate	118	21.7	University graduate	181	33.3
Master's degree	6	1.1	Master's degree	6	1.1
Unspecified	2	0.4	Unspecified	3	0.6
Total	543	100.0	Total	543	100.0

In order to better understand the economic dimension as it related to work, it was determined whether the participating parents were employed, unemployed, or retired. The most important point emphasized in Table 3 was that nearly 40% of mothers responded as being employed.

Table 3

Parents' employment status

<i>Mother</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Father</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Public sector	107	19.7	Public sector	185	34.1
Private sector	80	14.7	Private sector	156	28.7
Own business	14	2.6	Own business	123	22.7
Housewife	342	63.0	Houseman	79	14.5
Total	543	100.0	Total	543	100.0

The number of family members living in the household (e.g., the number of individuals living under the same roof) provided valuable information regarding the socio-economic status of participating families. The average number of individuals living in the same household ranged from four to five people (n=395; 72.7%).

4.2 Data collection tools and analysis

For the data collection, a questionnaire developed by the researchers was used because it is not able to find a specific instrument in the literature to determine families' opinions about their children's after-school attendance. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part included 29 questions designed to gather information regarding personal demographic information in order to understand better the participants' economic, educational, and social characteristics; for example, as the number of rooms in their houses; heating system in where they live etc. For the second part, the primary questions were designed in order to allow researchers the opportunity to learn more about the types of activities, participation frequency, reasons for participation in and expectations of participation in various after-school programmes. This part included 10 questions aimed at collecting data regarding the expectations, opinions, and preferences relating to after-school programme participation; for example, if their children participate in any education, culture, art, sports programme after school hours; if not why; what the reason is if the training does not meet your expectations.

4.3 Setting

We collected data from Aydın located in Turkey's Aegean Region -at the heart of the lower valley of the Ancient Meander River. It has had a reputation for successful educational attainment in various nationwide exams for several decades. In the study, seven primary schools which were surveyed were urban public schools located in the city center. While the socio-economic level of the

families in the two of these schools is remarkably lower, the other schools, to which the surveys were handed out, are in the middle and the upper-middle level.

5 Results

This study was conducted in order to better understand whether participation in after-school programmes by elementary school aged children was in any way correlated to the socio-economic level of their families, as well as whether after-school programme choice, preference, and/or satisfaction were in any way affected according to the socio-economic and/or socio-cultural level of participant families. The socio-economic and cultural status, participant families' socio-economic and cultural status, their motivations for being oriented towards specific after-school programmes, along with their expectations relating to the organization and operation of after-school programmes including their levels of satisfaction were interpreted and categorized.

The researchers tested their hypothesis that the socio-economic levels and living conditions of participant families did in fact affect families' perceptions regarding aspects of after-school programmes. More than one-third of all participant parents combined (35%) were categorized into either the lower-income group (n=81; 14.9%) or middle-lower income group (n=112; 20.6%). While, a majority of parents was in the middle-income group (n=206; 37.9%), next the middle-upper income group (n=136; 25%), was followed and the remaining parents were in the top income group (n=8; 1.5%) according to their reported socio-economic income level.

When we considered parents at the lowest socio-economic level (e.g., lower income group; 14.9%) the expectation was that their priorities would be focused on providing the basic needs to their families which included urban school education, yet not necessarily on their attending after-school programmes for academics and/or the arts and sports.

In the sample group, a majority of parents perceived themselves as economically average, a high percentage were homeowners (n=313; 57.6%), while approximately one-third of families rented a house or apartment (n=176; 32.4%), and a small percentage lived in a home owned by a grandparent or other relative (n=54; 9.9%). The families living in a relative's residence most often did so because of economic hardship.

In the sample data gathered, the number of parents declaring their monthly income over 3000 TL (n=145; 26.7%). The proportion of families stating they had access to an in-home domestic assistant (e.g., childcare, house cleaning, meal preparation) was low (n=32; 5.9%). The remaining (n=501; 96%) stated clearly that they did not receive in-home services, and the number of parents (n=10; 1.8%) who did not provide a clear answer in this regard most likely completed household chores themselves.

The hypothesis that the expectation of academic success is inversely proportional to the level of participation in after-school programmes has been established in connection with the expectations of parents' and the priority placed on their children's education.

Many of the parents who send their children to academic tutors and/or after-school courses do so in order to improve their children's success on standardized tests, and these parents also tend to see extra-curricular activities such as the arts and sports (e.g., dance, drama, music; basketball, football, and karate) as a waste of time. It is important to understand parents' perceptions regarding their child's academic success when considering what expectations parents have for their children. The estimates of students' academic achievement for the grade-levels assessed were predominantly above average or higher (n=404; 74.4%), and as a result, the parent's expectations for their children's success were high (n=131; 24.1% near average and n=8; 1.5% at a below-average level).

When comparing these combined levels of estimated academic achievement, above average and highest level (74.4%), with after-school programme attendance rates (33.9%; Table 4), it appeared that a majority of parents were unwilling to accept anything less than academic success from their children. As a result, many parents seemed interested in only focusing on their children's intellectual development and were uninterested in their children attending arts, social, and/or sports related after-school programmes. While parents level of satisfaction with their children's schools was extremely high (n=494; 91%) in comparison to the parents' estimates of their children's academic success, it was interesting that the proportion of parents with no knowledge of their children's academic achievement (n=31; 5.7%) was higher than the proportion of parents (n=18; 3.3%) who viewed their children as academically unsuccessful.

From this finding, it can be surmised in general that some parents inadequately participated in their children's educational development. Also, important to understand is that parents' beliefs that their children's schools provided an appropriate learning environment can also be associated with parents' having high expectations for their children's academic success.

The parents' thoughts were also queried regarding their children's participation in after-school programmes operated by their school which related in any way to extra-curricular activities (e.g., the arts, culture, and/or sports activities). This was an important question because it allowed us for better understanding of the children's level of school satisfaction, as well as whether the children's intellectual development was being adequately supported during after-school hours. The responses showed that approximately one-third of parents stated their children participated in extra-curricular programmes organized and operated by their schools (33.9%). While the proportion of children who were involved or

not with non-school related after-school programmes was approximately, double (66.1%) (See Table 4).

Table 4

<i>Participation in school related extra-curricular after-school programs</i>		
<i>School related after-school program participation</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	184	33.9
No	359	66.1
Total	543	100.0

There are a wide variety of after-school programmes which range from physical activity (Behrens, Wegner, Miller, Liebert, & Smith, 2015; Jago et al., 2015), to healthy eating (Shaykis, 2015) and to more academic pursuits such as science education-spreading the message of veterinarians' role in human health- (San, 2015). When the parents were queried regarding their children's participation in after-school programmes not organized and operated by their schools, it was recognized that much of their participation was directed towards academic learning and educational training. While participation in extra-curricular programmes (e.g., the arts, culture, and/or sports activities) often considered positive for children's emotional, moral, physical, and social development were participated in at a much lower rate. The percentage of participation in non-school related after-school programmes was highest for academic training (n=104; 19.1%). After then, sports participation (n=97; 17.86%), arts (n=41; 7.5%) / culture programmes 2.9% (n=16) and other categories followed this with much less participation at (n=4; 0.7%).

In our sample, where the middle-income group was predominant, a weak and negative correlation was found between the proportion of children participating in after-school programmes and the economic level of the children's families [$r(543) = -0.22$; $p < 0.05$]. This finding suggested that as the level of family income increased, the proportion of children's participation in such programmes decreased, but this was not remarkable. There was a weak relationship between the participation of children in after-school programmes and the income groups of the parents in the negative direction ($p = 0.000$; $r = -0.228$). This showed that not all after-school programmes were economically exclusive, that some amount of free programmes could be located, and/or that the urban schools had offered a limited number of after-school opportunities. Attractiveness or accessibility of programmes may have also attributed to the levels and types of after-school programme participation.

Most of the parents who responded positively to the question; "Does your child attend any activity programme during after-school hours?" were from the middle

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and upper-middle income groups. Most of the negative respondents were from families in the middle and middle-bottom income groups (see Table 5).

Table 5

Distribution of children's participation in after-school activities (ASA) by income groups

<i>Participation to ASA (%)</i>	<i>Family income group</i>					<i>Total</i> <i>(n - %)</i>
	<i>Low</i> <i>(n - %)</i>	<i>Mid-bottom</i> <i>(n - %)</i>	<i>Middle</i> <i>(n - %)</i>	<i>Mid-upper</i> <i>(n - %)</i>	<i>Top</i> <i>(n - %)</i>	
Yes (% 20)	17 - 9.2	25 - 13.6	69 - 37.5	68 -37.0	5 - 2.7	184 - 33.89
No (% 80)	64 -17.8	87 - 24.2	137 - 38.1	68 -19.0	3 - 0.9	359 - 66.11
Total	81- 14.9	112 -20.6	206 - 38.0	136 -25.0	8 - 1.5	543 - 100

As it is illustrated in Table 5, the middle-income families were the predominant determinants in their children's preference for participating in after-school activities. A large segment of the families whose children attended after-school programmes belonged to the middle to upper-middle income group. It appeared that parents from this income group (e.g., middle to upper-middle) had interest in and/or the financial ability to support their children's after-school education, or they sent their children to free in-school programmes during the school hours. Given the economic and educational status of families who were or were not directing their children to attend after-school programmes, the proportion of parents in the middle-lower group appeared to be lower.

For the families categorized at the low and middle-bottom socio-economic levels in contrast to the other schools, there was a greater difference between the parents sending their children to after-school programmes with those who do not send. Considering the fact that the social-economic level of parents who did not send their children to after-school programmes was low, the parents were queried regarding the primary reasons why this rate was low.

The parents' preferences for sending children to after-school education programmes can be seen in Table 6a and Table 6b.

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Table 6a

Parents' preferences of activity type in afterschool programs

<u>Parents' preferences for after-school programs to send children</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Educational activities	104	19.15
Sports	97	17.86
Arts	41	7.55
Cultural	16	2.95
Not sending to any program	285	52.49
Total	543	100.00

Table 6b

Parents' specific preferences of the after-school programs among the educational activities

<u>Preferences for education programs</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Tutoring / study time	61	58.7
Language courses	21	20.1
Science-Art education center (SAEC)	2	1.9
Handcrafted education	3	2.9
Other education activities	17	16.4
Total	104	100.0

The primary reason given by parents for not sending their children to the after-school programmes were that they believed that after-school programmes were cost prohibitive (n=110), or that their children were too tired from the school day to attend after-school programmes (n=123). Fewer parents responded that they could not locate an appropriate course for their child (n=53), or that there was not an after-school programme near enough to where they lived (n=57). In addition, it was remarkable to see the number of parents (n=42) who responded that they did not see after-school programmes as being necessary. This was believed to be related to the parents' level of education, as well as their perception of what after-school programmes provided to their children. Although, these parents considered these programmes unnecessary, we believe another reason for their decision was not making their children's education a priority. When the distribution of what motivated parents not to send their children to after-school programmes was evaluated, it was recognized that most parents believed their children were too exhausted from their school day to warrant further course work. The types of after-school activities, which parents chose for their children, were classified into four main categories and the distribution then assessed.

It was often the case that parents appeared to focus on the child's in-school academic success. For example, if children brought home homework, then their parents believed that after-school time should be utilized for completing them in-school studies and not for participation in further studying, training, and/or extracurricular activities.

The parents also provided responses regarding their choices for sending their children to sports related extra-curricular after-school programmes. The predominant response which parents provided for which sports-related programme they sent their children to was football (e.g., soccer) (n=36; 39.5%). Furthermore, the primary motivation provided by parents for sending their children to football was the convenience in locating and traveling to a football programme, as well as the popularity of football in their community and their children's interest in football. The number of parents who chose to include their children in other sports related extra-curricular after-school programmes, such as basketball (n=10; 11%), chess (n=9; 9.9%), dance, swimming (n=7; 7.7%), taekwondo-karate (n=7; 7.7%), tennis (n=5; 5.5%), volleyball (n=5; 5.5%), gymnastics-ballet (n=5; 5.5%) and so forth Ping pong (e.g., table tennis n=2; skating n=1) was significantly less.

Some students attended multiple sports related after-school programmes, for example, two students were reported to attend both swimming & tennis, one other student, swimming & volleyball, and another, taekwondo & football (participating in two sport activities n=9). In addition, six more parents reported their children being involved in multiple sports related to after-school programmes but those parents failed to respond to which sports activity the children attended.

It was also clear from parents' responses that their preferences for sending their children to after-school programmes related to the arts and/or cultural activities were low. Given the educational and socio-economic status of many of the parents, it was not surprising that many parents showed little interest in sending their children to artistic and/or cultural programmes (ballet-dance n=1; 3.1%; paper marbling-crafts n=1; 3.1%; film-photography-drawing n=2; 6.3%) except for music (n=25; 78.1%). Another motivating factor for parents not preferring to send their children to non-academic after-school programs was the inconvenience of locating an appropriate arts and/or cultural programmes near their home.

Of the parents who responded that their children were involved in multiple arts programmes, one student was reported to be involved in both ballet-dance (e.g., dance activities) and film-photography (e.g., visual arts activities); while two other students were reported participating in film-photography along with music activities. Nine parents failed to provide information regarding which arts related after-school activities their children attended.

The parents who sent their children to after-school programmes provided a variety of opinions regarding their children meeting the expectations of the programmes. Surprisingly though, slightly more than half of parents (54.3%) had no opinion on this issue. Just over 30% of parents had positive opinions and 15.3% had opinions that the expectations were somewhat be met or were not met at all (see Table 7).

Table 7

Parents' opinions regarding their children meeting expectations

<i>Parents' opinions of children meeting expectations</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
I am absolutely satisfied	65	12.0
Satisfied	100	18.4
It is satisfying somewhat	52	9.6
It satisfies a little	18	3.3
It isn't satisfying at all	13	2.4
Have no idea	295	54.3
Total	543	100.0

The parents often believed their children were not able to meet expectations because of the poor physical environment at the after-school programmes, or the inadequacy of the course instructors/trainers. The participating parents were queried through four questions about their opinions regarding how after-school programmes contributed to their children's development. The results revealed that there were a significant number of parents who had positive opinions (e.g., I totally agree or I agree) regarding the after-school programme's contribution in terms of their children's physical development (n=223), social progress (n=276) and utilizing their spare time constructively (e.g., intellectual and/or physical development) (n=246).

For all questions the number of parents who were in the opinion that each of these after-school programmes inadequately contributed to their children's improvement was low.

We also examined the level of parents' satisfaction in regards to their children's participation in urban school operated after-school programmes, as well as their satisfaction with their children's schools in general. The parents' responses revealed that a majority of them (n=429; 79%) had high levels of satisfaction regarding the level of education their children received both in the school operated after-school programmes, as well as at their school in general (see Table 8).

Table 8

Parents' satisfaction with schools and school operated after-school programs (ASP)

<u>Parents' satisfaction with school operated ASP and schools in general</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
I am very pleased	192	35.4
Satisfied	237	43.6
Moderately pleased	86	15.8
I am not satisfied / not happy at all	12	2.2
No idea	16	3.0
Total	543	100.0

It was important to point out the inverse correlation between the children's level of satisfaction regarding their schools and the parents' level of satisfaction regarding the presence of in-school after-school programmes at these schools (e.g., children's level of school satisfaction was 79% while parents' satisfaction with in-school after-school programs was 28.9%; n=157). In other words, the parents who expressed their children's satisfaction with their schools also expressed their own dissatisfaction with the after-school programmes offered by the urban schools, or the inability to have such programmes in the children's schools. A large number of parents (n=386) responded that even though their children were satisfied with their schools in general, the children along with the parents were not satisfied with their school's after-school programme (e.g., educational, arts, culture, and/or sports) offerings.

It appears that a high level of interest from parents, unconditionally or conditionally, in having their children participate in after-school programmes (e.g., educational, arts, cultural, and sports) organized by their children's schools (n=512). Most parents' who responded positively (e.g., Yes) to the question "Do you want your children to participate in after-school activities, do you send your children to these events?" did so unconditionally (n=252; 46.4%), while a much smaller number of parents did so conditionally (n=260; 47.9%). The parents' responses regarding their choices for sending their children to after-school programmes were generally higher in terms of "finances, quality, and time" and more importantly, the number of parents not willing to send their children to after-school programmes were very low (n=31; 5.7%).

While parents' interest in their children's intellectual and physical development through participation in after-school programmes was seen as a positive, there was also a recognition that for urban schools to provide the appropriate level, number, and type of after-school programmes and/or activities for these children was a major responsibility.

6 Discussion and conclusion

One of the primary goals of this study was to conduct a thorough investigation which provided a more comprehensive inventory of the data collected, which ultimately allowed the researchers to establish a more encompassing view of the state of after-school programmes and not only a circumstantial cursory view.

Predictions for the level of success being at average, above average, or at the highest level were viewed as a representation of the participants' satisfaction with education in general. Perhaps the high-levels of academic success and the positive levels of satisfaction with education may encourage student participation in after-school programmes. If the schools offer after-school programmes, in average daily student attendance increases and chronic absenteeism decreases, because the organized after-school programmes may motivate students to come to school to participate in the activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Parents can indirectly encourage their children - upon their age - by supporting their children through many educational activities including helping with homework, supporting extracurricular activities, attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, driving them to school, etc. (Paun, 2024). In the study, it was recognized that there was a high level of parent satisfaction when queried regarding their children's schools. Furthermore, three-quarters of our parent sample group (33.9%) stated that their children were participating in extracurricular activities, which was an important finding because this rate overlapped with the information regarding socio-economic status queried from parents at the outset of our survey. In the related literature, the family predictor of participation in after-school programmes is socio economic status. In addition, the literature specified that children from high SES families are more likely to participate in after-school activities than the children from low SES families (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2009; Cheung, 2017; Chin & Phillips, 2004).

In the study, the inverse correlation was seen between the children's level of satisfaction from their schools and the parents' satisfaction as regards the presence of after-school activities in urban school settings. Probably, this situation is related to the effects of after-school programmes on reflecting the level of overall sensitivity of schools in addressing the needs of families and society and the challenges they face (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

The children of families having limited income preferred low-cost and easily accessible activities, such as football, basketball, music than skating, ping-pong, swimming etc. This result was consistent with some studies (Hao & Yeung, 2015; Shann, 2001) stating that low-SES families spend less money on activities. Additionally, limited access, availability, and affordability of organized activities in low-income areas coupled with parents' work schedules are established barriers to participation (e.g. Casey, Ripke, & Huston, 2005; Lareau & Weininger; cited in Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005).

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Educational attainment and after-school activities are strongly influenced by social capital that was coined by French sociologist Bourdieu (1986). In order to understand the relationship between educational achievement, social mobility and family's role social capital is crucial. Social capital can be defined as social conditions that positively contribute to keeping or even gaining academic success and social mobility. "Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." (Bourdieu; as cited in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119)

In a similar time, frame in the late 1980 and early 1990s the term social capital was also used by an influential American sociologist James Coleman. He cantered on individuals or small groups as the units of analysis. For him, both social capital in the family and social capital in the community play roles in creating of human capital in the rising generation. As he argues, "ordinarily, in the examination of the effects of various factors on achievement in school, family background" is considered a single entity, distinguished from schooling in its effects" (Coleman, 1988, p. 109).

It is noticed that after-school programmes are far more prevalent in economically developed countries. Although many of the existing studies did not offer the types of information which constituted further research interest for us, there has been a valuable amount of empirical data relating to after-school programmes that was of interest.

Our results strongly support the first hypothesis/assumption that the most important variable in determining the families' choices, opinions, and preferences regarding after-school programmes was their socio-economic status. For example, the educational level the parents had completed as well as their occupational experience; along with, the activity and educational preferences of their children, most affected their participation levels in and choices related to after-school programmes. According to Kugler (2001), a number of societal concerns have contributed to the recent increase in after-school programmes and there is a belief that economically disadvantaged children can improve learning outcomes if given more opportunities. Besides, the social ecology of after-school programmes realized that low-income urban children who attended formal after-school programmes were exposed to more learning opportunities than children in other forms of after-school care were. The children in the low-income group spent more time in academic activities and less time watching TV and engaging in unstructured activities in the neighborhood. They only were participated the enrichment courses, such as music and dance, in an after-school program, because these subjects are not a part of their lives (Posner & LoweVandell, 1994).

The results show a strong positive correlation between the socioeconomic income level and the after-school participation. When the participants' socioeconomic status and attendance of the after-school programmes compared each group within itself, it clearly shows that the rate of participation in the after-school programmes is lowest (only 20 percent in low income, 22 percent in lower-middle, 33 percent in middle income, 50 percent in upper-middle income and 62 percent in upper income group). What this finding indicates is that on the one hand income level is still one of the strongest indicators in terms of educational opportunities that school children would get in their early school years and on the other hand, only one third (33.9 percent) of our participants say their children do attend after-school programmes. This means that two third of all school children do not get the chance to attend such programmes. These results support Vandell and Corasaniti's (1990) study of middle-class children, which asserted that more problematic social, emotional, and academic functioning of children in formal after-school programmes was observed than those in mother care or self-care.

With reference to access and availability, for example the gap in supply vs. demand of organized activities in low-income areas – both in terms of current provisions and the funding to sustain existing activities is documented (e.g. Afterschool Alliance, 2005; Mahoney & Zigler, 2006). Thus, in many cases low-income parents and their children want to be more involved in organized activities but are not able (Lareau & Weininger; as cited in Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005).

If the after-school programmes are strongly related with the better school attainments, perhaps our findings provide some explanation for the poor state of school attainments overall in Turkey. According to the recent PISA tests scores Turkey has been on the decline amongst OECD countries (OECD, 2015). When further inquiry is made into the reasons for not sending the children to such programmes, almost one-third (28.5 percent) find the courses too expensive while 15 percent said they do not have such programmes around, and 14 per cent said there are not suitable after-school programmes. Therefore, our findings seem to say something important for improving the overall state of educational attainment in after-school programmes within the Turkish education system.

In other words, a linear relationship between the proportion of children whose academic achievement levels were close to average and those whose families were at an above average socio-economic status and the children were sent to after-school programmes was evident. Further data, as illustrated in Table 5, confirmed the existence of a direct positive correlation between the frequency of sending children to after-school programmes and their families' socio-economic status. For example, urban schools whose parents had a high socio-economic

status tended to also have high-levels of school revenue and as a result, a clear advantage in organizing and operating after-school programmes.

In this study discussion, it was important to note that our findings exhibited a great degree of compatibility with our original assumptions. Accordingly, while there appeared to be general interest in after-school programmes, the likelihood of actualizing interest in these programmes into real-world practice seemed most determined by the socio-economic status of the participant families. For example, the results revealed that the highest levels of after-school programme participation occurred amongst middle and upper-middle class families. Although the investigation of after-school programmes in Turkey can be a challenging research venture, we believe that this research study has ultimately provided a wealth of data and information that can fill many significant academic research gaps regarding this topic. At the same time, we hope that these findings encourage and guide future researchers to conduct similar research regarding this field of inquiry.

Acknowledgements

This study is performed as a part of the project named “The examination, development and evaluation of after school programs, which elementary school students attend out of school hours” and supported by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey - Grant number: 114 K158).

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