School Breakfast Clubs: Does Attendance Impact Upon Children’s Peer Relationships?

Pamela L. Graham, Greta Defeyter and Riccardo Russo
What is a Breakfast Club?

- Safe place to go before the start of the school day
- Opportunity to meet with friends and staff
- Nutritious breakfast
- Activities to take part in

(Defeyter, Graham, Walton and Apicella, 2010)
Benefits of Breakfast Club

School breakfast participation has been linked to improvements in:

- Classroom behaviour (Bro et al, 1994)
- Maths grades (Murphy et al, 1998)
- School attendance (Simeon, 1998)

Benefits associated with school breakfast participation have been attributed mainly to the breakfast meal.

Potential impact of the social environment has received little attention.
The Breakfast Club Environment

Group Mealtimes

- Build a sense of community and belonging (Fulkerson et al, 2006)

- Facilitate interaction between individuals (Cason, 2006)

- Opportunity to teach social skills (Eisenberg et al, 2004)
More Than Just a Meal?

Out of School Activities

- Positive peer interaction (Bartko & Eccles, 2003)
- Development of friendship (Bartko & Eccles, 2003)
- Protection from victimisation (Hodges et al, 1999)
Aim of Present Study

To investigate whether breakfast club attendance facilitates children’s peer relationships in school.

- Friendship quality
- Peer victimisation
Participants

8 primary schools
 n = 268
163 females  105 males
Mean age = 8.4 years
Age range = 6.3 years – 10.11 years

Breakfast Club
 n = 94
59 females  35 males
Mean age = 8.24 years

After School Club
 n = 86
47 females  39 males
Mean age = 8.75 years

Control
 n = 88
57 females  31 males
Mean age = 8.24 years
Friendship Qualities Scale
(Bukowski, Hoza and Boivin, 1994)

+ Companionship – free time spent together
+ Help – mutual help, assistance and protection
+ Security – reliance and conflict resolution
+ Closeness – emotional bond between friends
- Conflict – fights, arguments and disagreements
Multidimensional Peer Victimisation Scale
(Mynard and Joseph, 2000)

- Physical victimisation – punching and kicking
- Verbal victimisation – name calling
- Social manipulation – turning friends against each other
- Attacks of physical property – damage or theft of possessions

Not at all  Once  More than once
Breakfast clubs started

Time 1

2 months

Friendship Qualities Scale & Peer Victimization Scale

Time 2

6 months

Friendship Qualities Scale & Peer Victimization Scale
Results: Friendship Qualities Scale
Breakfast Club

Friendship Quality Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>*</td>
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* p<0.01
Results: Friendship Qualities Scale
After School Club

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Friendship Quality Dimensions</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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## Results: Friendship Qualities Scale Control

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<td>Help</td>
<td>Mean Score</td>
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<td>Closeness</td>
<td>Mean Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* p<0.01
Results: Peer Victimization Scale
Breakfast Club

Dimensions of Victimization

- Physical
- Social
- Verbal
- Property

Mean Score

* p<0.01
Results: Peer Victimisation Scale After School Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Victimisation</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.01
Results: Peer Victimisation Scale Control

Dimensions of Victimisation

- Physical
- Social
- Verbal
- Property

Mean Score

* p<0.01
Discussion

- No significant differences between groups at time 1
  - Findings cannot be ascribed to inherent differences between groups at time 1

- Breakfast club attendance did appear to facilitate children’s relationships with their peers in school
  - Small group meal might be the driving force
Discussion

- Out of school club attendance led to a reduction in victimisation across time

- Out of school clubs might provide a protective peer group