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Does Breakfast Club Attendance Benefit Children's Social Relationships?



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Introduction:

Prior research into school breakfast clubs has linked participation to numerous benefits including improvements in nutrient intake at breakfast (Murphy et al, 2010) and fruit intake (Shemilt et al, 2004).

Evaluations of school breakfast clubs have predominantly focussed on the effect of the breakfast meal, while the potential impact of the social environment has received little attention.



Aim of Current Study:

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether breakfast club attendance facilitates children's relationships with their peers in school.

Method:

Participants:

268 primary school children (mean age=8.4 years; age range=6.3 years-10.11 years) from 8 primary schools in the UK.

Participants were divided into 3 groups based on their out of school club participation:

- 94 breakfast club attendees
- 86 after school club attendees
- 88 controls – attended no school clubs

Materials:

- Friendship quality was measured using the Friendship Qualities Scale (Bukowski, Hoza & Boivin, 1994).

- Peer victimisation was measured using the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (Mynard & Joseph, 2000).

Procedure:

Children completed the Friendship Qualities Scale and the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale 2 months after the introduction of breakfast club then again 6 months later.

Results: Friendship Quality

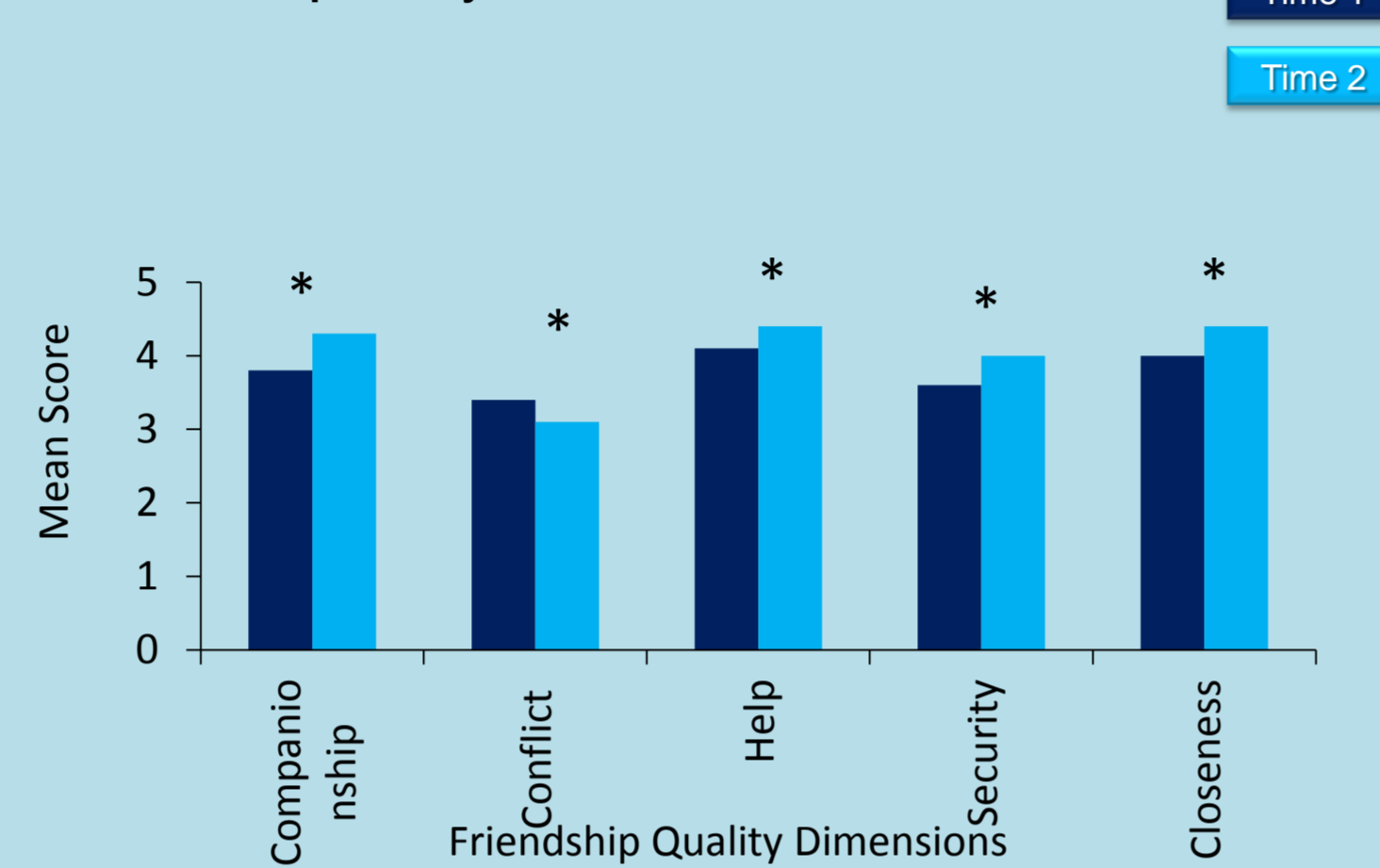


Figure 1: Mean friendship quality scores for breakfast club attendees at Time 1 and Time 2

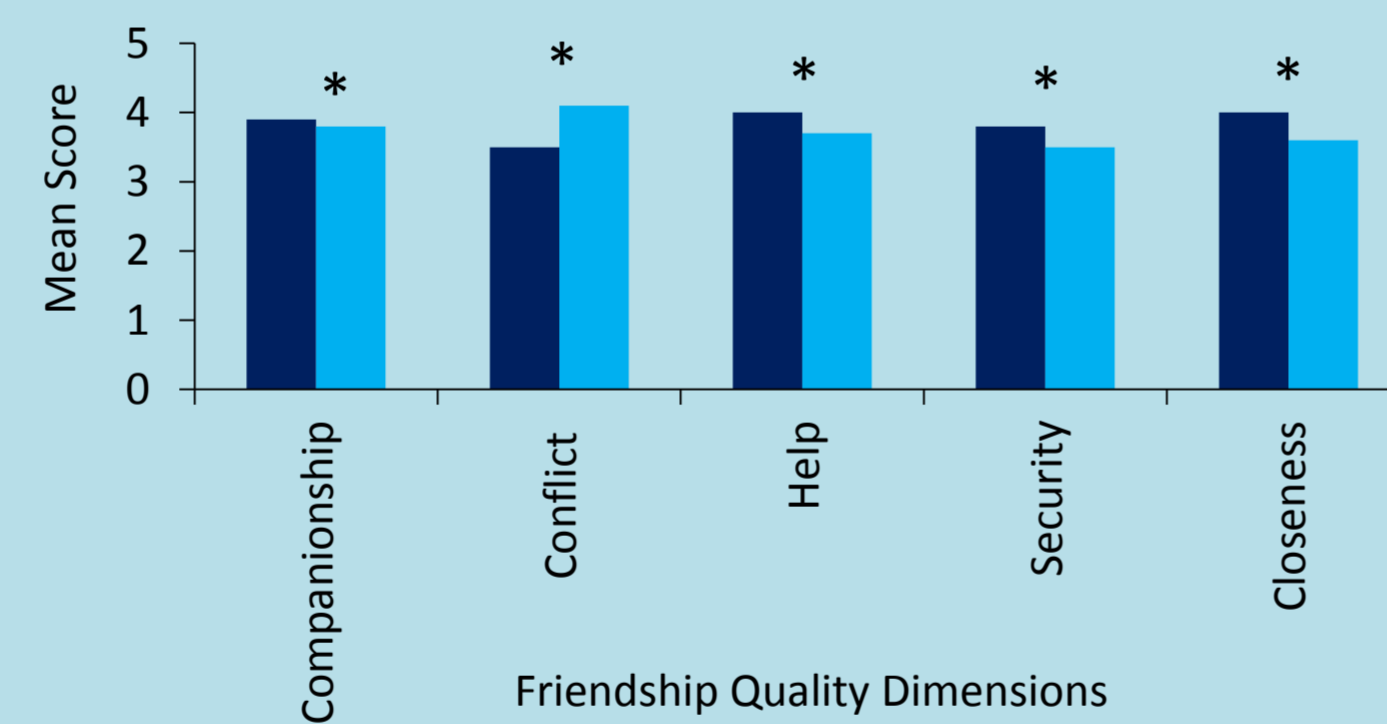


Figure 2: Mean friendship quality scores for after school club attendees at Time 1 and Time 2

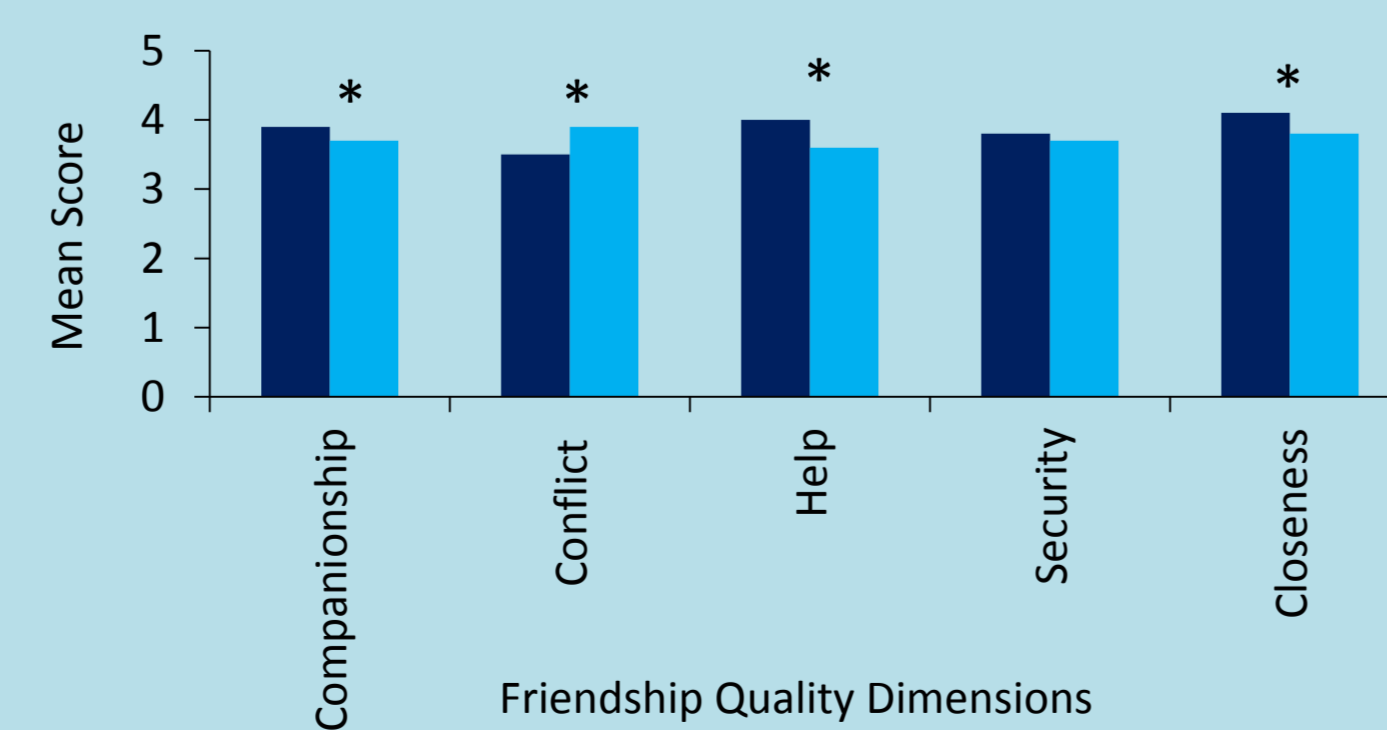


Figure 3: Mean friendship quality scores for the control group at Time 1 and Time 2

*p<0.01

Results: Peer Victimization

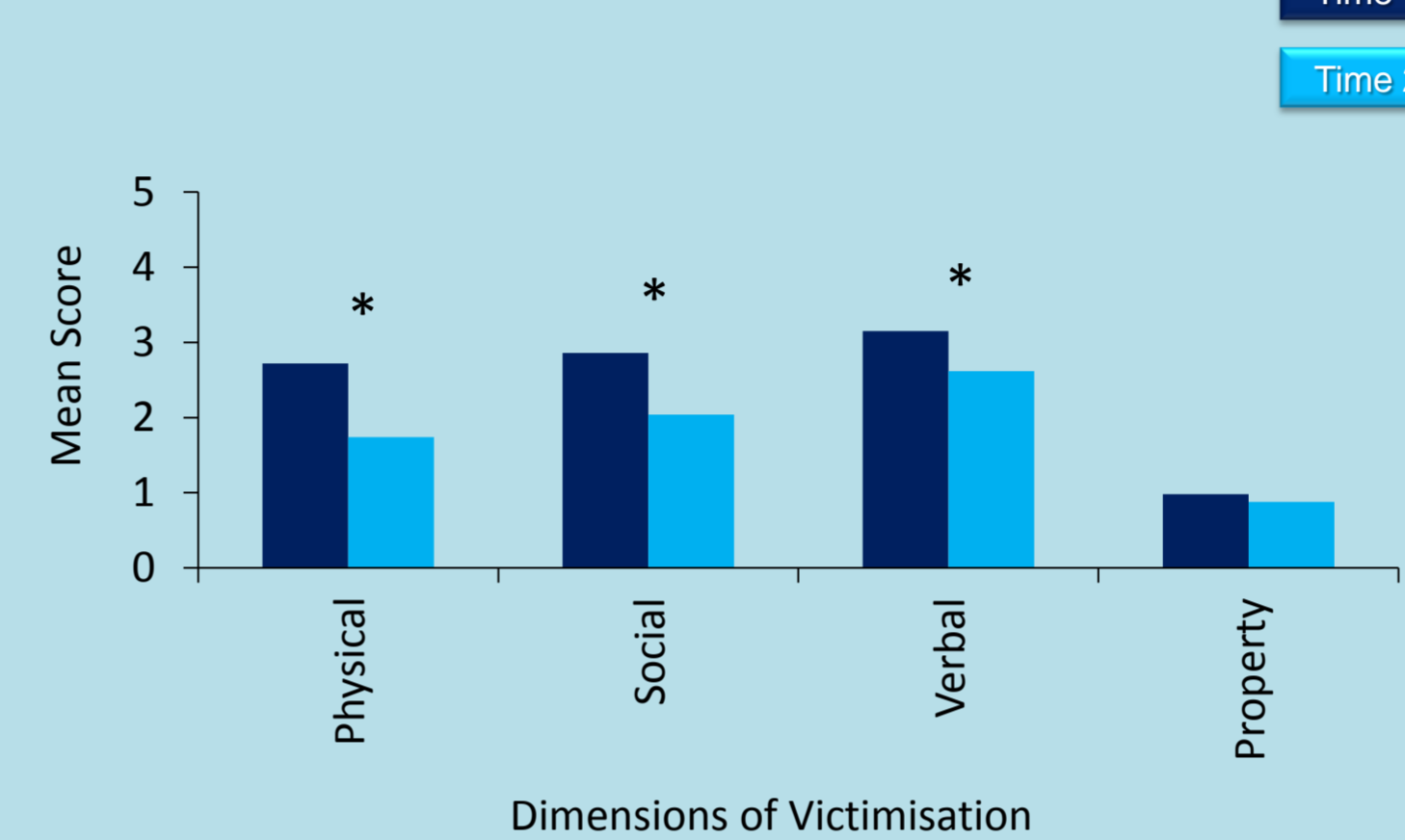


Figure 4: Mean peer victimisation scores for breakfast club attendees at Time 1 and Time 2

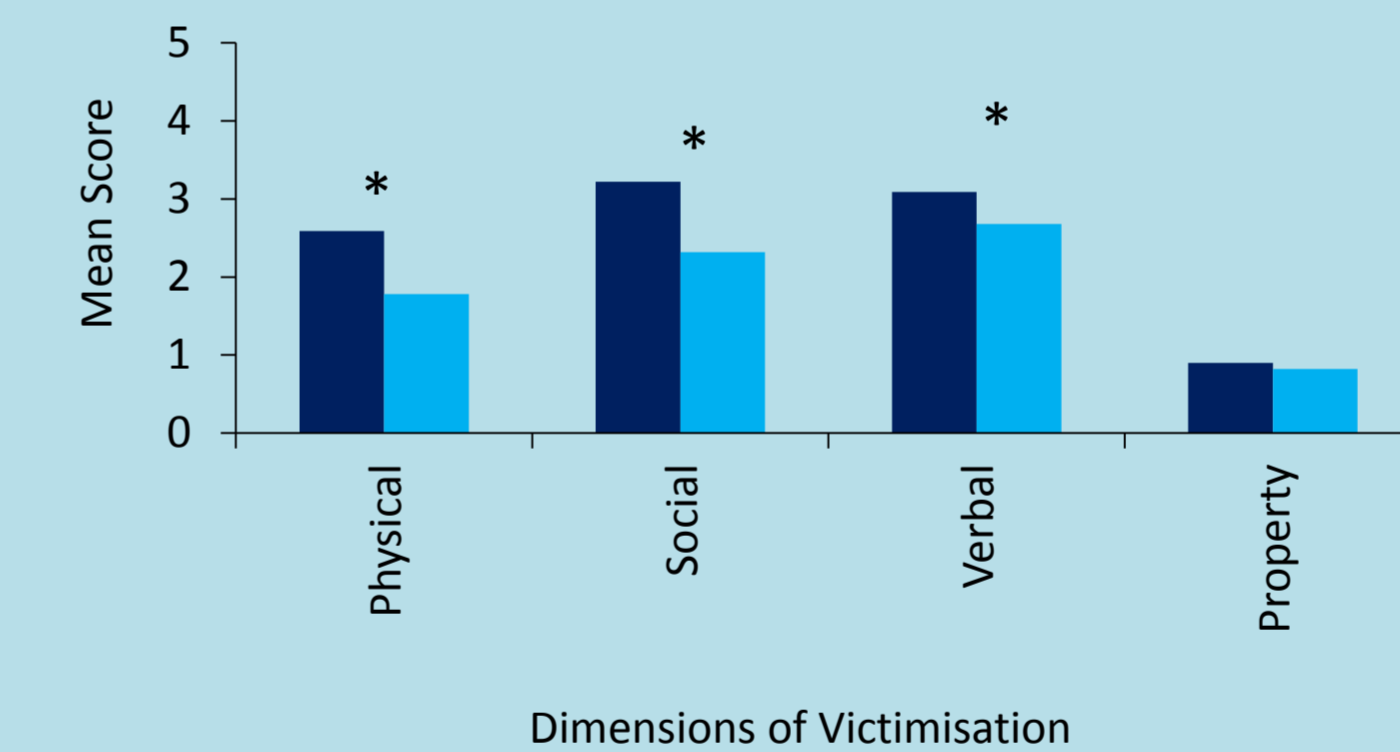


Figure 5: Mean peer victimisation scores for after school club attendees at Time 1 and Time 2

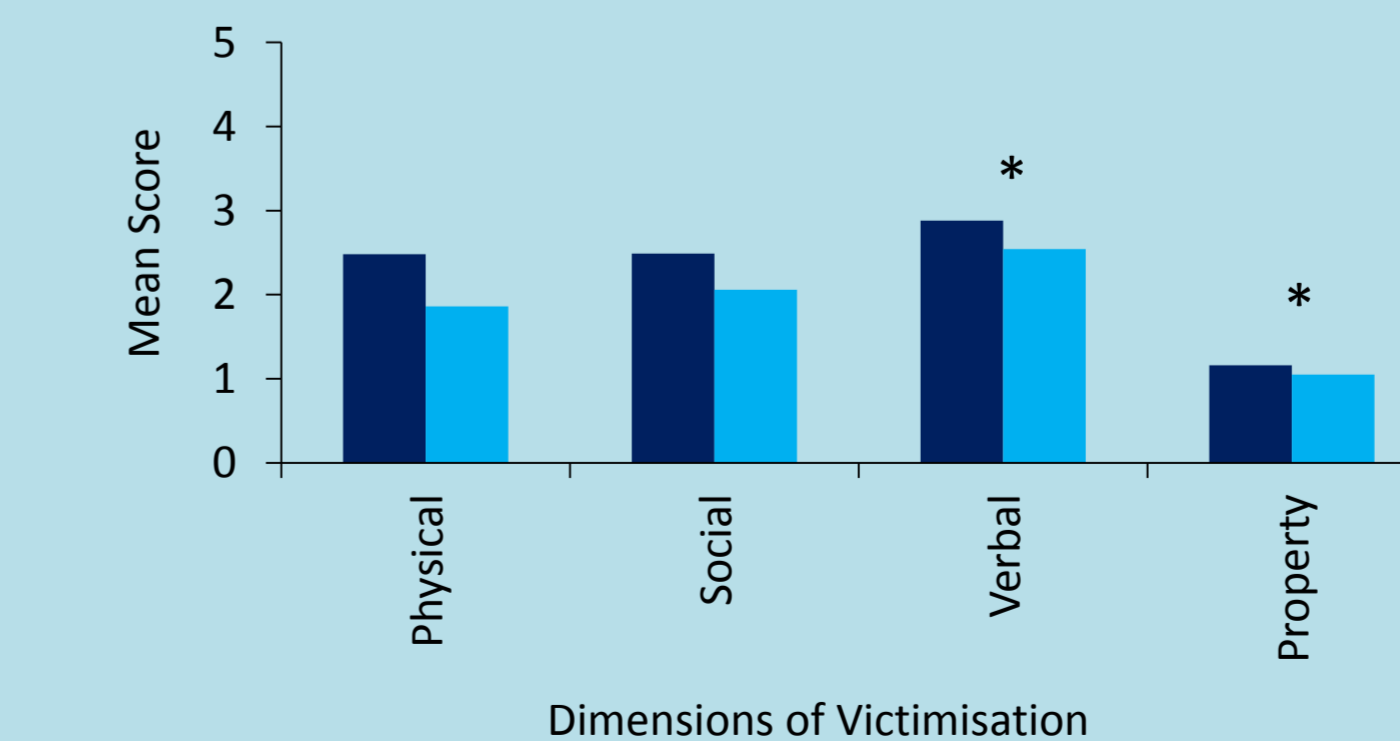


Figure 6: Mean peer victimisation scores for the control group at Time 1 and Time 2

*p<0.01

Summary of Results:

- A one-way ANOVA revealed no differences between groups in terms of friendship quality ($F(1, 265) = 1.16, p > .10$) or peer victimisation ($F(1, 265) = 1.7, p > .10$) at Time 1
- For friendship quality, factorial ANOVA's revealed a significant group by time interaction on all friendship dimensions for each group when scores from Time 1 were compared to scores from Time 2
- For peer victimisation, factorial ANOVA's showed a significant group by time interaction for physical and social victimisation in the breakfast club and after school club groups
- All groups showed a significant reduction in verbal victimisation across time
- The control group showed a significant decrease in property related victimisation across time

Discussion:

- Breakfast club attendance facilitates the quality of children's friendships with their best friend across time
- Spending time in an out of school club, before or after school, can reduce children's exposure to victimisation across time
- Research is currently being conducted to investigate whether out of school club attendance influences the social relationships of secondary school pupils



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