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Background

School breakfast club attendance has been linked to improvements in children's social relationships (Defeyter et al, 2010), cognition, academic performance and nutrition (for a review, see Hoyland et al, 2009). However, the question of whether breakfast club attendance impacts upon children's behaviour remains inconclusive, with some researchers suggesting that behaviour improves following breakfast club attendance (Murphy et al, 1998) and others finding that children's behaviour becomes more boisterous (Shemilt et al, 2002).

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether children's behaviour changes across the duration of the breakfast club session.

Method

Participants:

232 children aged between 7 and 11 years (mean=8.2; range=7.1-11.3; 145 females and 87 males) were observed across 75 breakfast club sessions.

Measures:

Children's behaviour was observed and recorded during the first and last five minutes of the breakfast club sessions. Behaviour was recorded according to 4 criteria: perceived classroom noise, level of excitability, number of positive and number of negative incidents of behaviour.. All children consumed a breakfast meal on entering the breakfast club session.



Results

Total scores for each behaviour at the beginning and end of the sessions were collapsed across 75 observations. The total scores at the beginning of the breakfast club sessions were compared to those at the end.

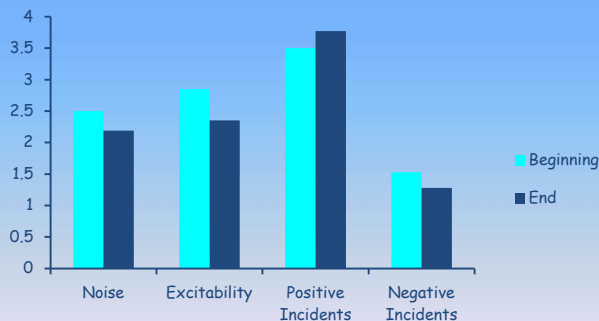


Figure 1: Total mean scores for behaviours observed across breakfast club sessions

Analysis revealed:

- A significant decrease in perceived classroom noise across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.18, p = 0.03$)
- A significant decrease in the level of excitable behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.96, p = 0.004$)
- A significant increase in the number of positive incidents of behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.21, p = 0.03$)
- A significant decrease in the number of negative incidents of behaviour across the breakfast club sessions ($t(74) = 2.47, p = 0.016$)

Summary and Conclusions

The results from the present study demonstrate that children's behaviour changes significantly across the breakfast club session with children displaying more positive behaviour and appearing quieter and less excitable at the end of the session than at the beginning. The current findings therefore provide support for existing evidence, which suggests that breakfast club attendance has a positive influence on children's behaviour.

Further research is now required to investigate whether improvements in children's behaviour across breakfast club sessions are a result of breakfast consumption or due to children spending time in a structured school environment.

References

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