

The researchers built
their study



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The research article by Suniya Luthar, Karen Shoum and Pamela Brown (2006) entitled “ Extracurricular involvement among affluent youth: A scapegoat for ubiquitous achievement pressures” attempted to determine the extracurricular involvement of high status secondary students and how this affected their academic performance and whether it was directly the source of the pressure to achieve.

The researchers built their study on the notion that children from affluent communities are overscheduled and have too many things to accomplish at a given day because it is expected by their parents.

They said that children’s involvement in extracurricular activities are imposed by their parents and thus places undue stress and pressure for the student to succeed and achieve. Although, some researchers had found evidence to support the assumption that involvement in extracurricular activities improved academic performance as groups, clubs and teams provide opportunities for healthy competition fostering the need to achieve as a desirable motive for subsequent endeavors.

Moreover, the researchers mainly focused their attention to affluent children or students who come from affluent families because they are more likely to be pressured by their parents to succeed. At the same time, affluent students have more chances of cultivating their interests in extracurricular activities because they have the resources to do so.

The authors defined extracurricular involvement as the degree to which students participate in activities that are not directly associated to their academic performance and has no bearing on their academic grades and is conducted outside of regular school hours with the presence of a coach or
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trainer. Extracurricular involvement was measured in terms of four broad categories; sports, arts, academics and civic.

The researchers hypothesized that upper class students are overscheduled and thus have more adjustment issues, however, they were more inclined to believe that hours spent in extracurricular activities are not to blame but the family processes that are related to academic achievement are the cause. The family processes include parent's emphasis on achievement; parental criticism, high achievement expectations and values that promoted getting ahead of others, lack of adult supervision after school and how often children ate dinner with parents.

The methods used to test the hypothesis of the researchers were varied; they used self-report questionnaires to obtain information on maladjustment indicators such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, while they used school grades and teacher rating behavior to measure academic performance and behavior.

The researchers also used a two dimensional framework in assessing their research outcomes, examining extracurricular activities and involvement per se, and how extracurricular activities competed with the measured family outcomes.

The results of the study indicated that there were minimal links between extracurricular activities and pressure leading to adjustment problems. The researchers found that there is a weak relationship in the time spent in sports, academic, arts and civic activities to that of behavioral maladjustments and competence.

The researchers however found evidence that supported the hypothesis that parental expectations were more detrimental to the student's adjustment. It was found that parental criticism and lack of adult supervision had a more negative effect to student behavior than other variables.