

The Impact of Hagwon (Private Tutoring Centers) on High School Students' Academic Performance in South Korea

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Hagwon (private tutoring centers) attendance on the academic performance, mental health, and social lives of high school students in South Korea. Hagwons have become an integral part of the South Korean education system, driven by the country's highly competitive academic environment. The analysis reveals that Hagwon attendance significantly enhances students' academic performance, particularly in standardized tests like the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). However, it also highlights substantial negative impacts on students' mental health, including increased stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Furthermore, the demanding schedules associated with Hagwon attendance adversely affect students' social lives and participation in extracurricular activities. The study underscores the socio-economic disparities in access to Hagwons, with wealthier families more likely to afford these services. Policy implications and recommendations are discussed, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach to education that supports both academic excellence and students' overall well-being.

Keywords: Hagwon, private tutoring centers, academic performance, mental health, South Korea, high school students, College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT)

1. Background and Context

1.1 Overview of South Korea's Education System

South Korea's education system is renowned for its rigorous and highly competitive nature, placing significant emphasis on academic achievement. The structure of the education system is designed to provide comprehensive and well-rounded education from early childhood through higher education. Below is a detailed description of each stage of the education system:

Early Childhood Education: This stage includes nursery schools and kindergartens, catering to children aged 3 to 5. The primary focus is on developing basic literacy, numeracy, and social skills. Early childhood education aims to create a foundation for lifelong learning and personal development.

Primary Education: Primary education in South Korea lasts for six years, typically for children aged 6 to 12. The curriculum at this stage includes core subjects such as Korean language, mathematics, science, social studies, and moral

education. Additionally, students participate in arts and physical education. Primary education aims to build fundamental knowledge and skills, preparing students for more advanced studies in middle school.

Middle School Education: Middle school, or junior high school, lasts for three years and is for students aged 12 to 15. The curriculum becomes more diversified at this stage, including subjects like English, technology, home economics, and additional elective courses alongside the core subjects. Middle school education focuses on broadening students' knowledge and skills, fostering critical thinking, and preparing them for the challenges of high school education.

High School Education: High school education is a three-year program for students aged 15 to 18. High schools in South Korea are divided into general academic, vocational, and specialized high schools, depending on the students' career aspirations and academic performance. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for the rigorous college entrance examinations. General academic high schools focus on preparing students for university education, while vocational and specialized high schools provide training in specific trades or fields.

Higher Education: Higher education in South Korea includes junior colleges, universities, and graduate schools. Admission to universities is highly competitive and primarily based on students' performance in the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), a national standardized test. Higher education institutions offer a wide range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Universities in South Korea are known for their strong emphasis on research and innovation, contributing significantly to the country's economic and technological advancements.

Lifelong Education: In addition to formal schooling, South Korea has a strong emphasis on lifelong education. Various adult education programs, continuing education courses, and professional development opportunities are available to ensure that individuals can continue to learn and grow throughout their lives. Lifelong education is seen as essential for personal development, career advancement, and adapting to the rapidly changing global economy.

Table 1. Diagram of the South Korean Education System Structure

Education Stage	Age Range	Type of Institutions
Early Childhood	3-5	Nursery schools, Kindergartens
Primary Education	6-12	Primary schools
Middle School Education	12-15	Middle schools
High School Education	15-18	General academic, Vocational, Specialized high schools
Higher Education	18+	Junior colleges, Universities, Graduate schools

The South Korean education system is characterized by its high academic standards and the significant societal pressure on students to excel. This has led to the proliferation of Hagwon, or private tutoring centers, which play a crucial role in supplementing the formal education system. These centers provide additional instruction and preparation for exams, aiming to enhance students' academic performance and secure their place in top-tier universities.

Hagwons have become an integral part of the South Korean education landscape, with a large percentage of students attending these private tutoring centers after regular school hours. The prevalence of Hagwons highlights the intense competition among students to achieve academic excellence and the high expectations from parents and society.

Overall, the South Korean education system is a comprehensive and structured framework designed to promote academic success and lifelong learning. However, it also presents challenges related to student well-being and equity in access to educational resources, which are areas of ongoing discussion and policy development.

1.2 The Role and Evolution of Hagwon

Hagwons, also known as private tutoring centers, have played a significant role in the South Korean education system for decades.

Their influence and prevalence have grown in response to the highly competitive nature of the country's academic environment. Hagwons first emerged in South Korea during the 1960s and 1970s, primarily as supplementary educational institutions aimed at helping students improve their academic performance and prepare for entrance exams. Initially, these private tutoring centers were modest in scale and focused on a few core subjects, such as mathematics and Korean language.

Over the years, the demand for private education grew rapidly, fueled by the increasing pressure on students to excel academically and secure admission to prestigious universities. The 1980s and 1990s saw a significant expansion of Hagwons, both in terms of the number of centers and the range of subjects offered. By this time, Hagwons were no longer limited to academic subjects but also included arts, music, sports, and language training, reflecting the diverse interests and needs of students. The proliferation of Hagwons was driven by several factors, including the rising aspirations of middle-class families, the perceived shortcomings of public education, and the societal emphasis on educational achievement as a pathway to socio-economic mobility. The government attempted to regulate and limit the operation of Hagwons during this period, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful due to the strong demand from parents and students.

Today, Hagwons are an integral part of the South Korean education system, with a substantial portion of students attending these centers after regular school hours. Hagwons provide additional instruction in subjects covered by the regular school curriculum, offering more personalized and intensive learning experiences. This supplementary education helps students reinforce their understanding of core subjects and improve their grades. One of the primary functions of Hagwons is to prepare students for critical standardized tests, such as the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). These centers offer specialized courses and practice exams designed to enhance students' test-taking skills and boost their scores.

Beyond academic subjects, Hagwons offer courses in various extracurricular activities, including music, art, sports, and foreign languages. These programs aim to develop well-rounded individuals with diverse talents

and interests. Hagwons also serve students who may be struggling with particular subjects or who need extra support to catch up with their peers. Remedial programs provide targeted assistance to help students overcome academic challenges. Attending Hagwons is often seen as essential for gaining a competitive edge in the fiercely competitive South Korean education landscape. Many parents and students believe that the additional instruction and resources provided by Hagwons are crucial for achieving academic success and securing admission to top-tier universities.

The widespread prevalence of Hagwons has both positive and negative impacts on students and society. On the positive side, Hagwons have been credited with helping students improve their academic performance and achieve higher test scores. The personalized attention and intensive instruction offered by these centers can enhance students' understanding of subjects and boost their confidence. However, the intense competition and high expectations associated with attending Hagwons can also lead to significant stress and pressure for students. The long hours spent in additional classes, combined with regular schoolwork, can result in burnout and mental health issues. The high cost of Hagwon tuition can exacerbate socio-economic disparities in education. While affluent families can afford to send their children to the best Hagwons, lower-income families may struggle to provide similar opportunities, leading to an uneven playing field.

The cultural emphasis on academic success and the reliance on private tutoring reflect broader societal values in South Korea. The pressure to excel academically is deeply ingrained, influencing parenting styles, student behavior, and overall societal attitudes towards education. In conclusion, Hagwons have evolved from modest supplementary educational institutions to a cornerstone of the South Korean education system. While they offer significant benefits in terms of academic improvement and skill development, they also present challenges related to student well-being and educational equity. Understanding the role and evolution of Hagwons is essential for addressing these issues and ensuring a balanced and fair education system in South Korea.

2. Socio-Economic Factors and Hagwon Attendance

2.1 Socio-Economic Background of Hagwon Students

Hagwons, or private tutoring centers, play a crucial role in the educational journey of many South Korean students. However, access to these educational resources is often influenced by the socio-economic backgrounds of the students. Understanding the socio-economic profiles of students who attend Hagwons can provide insights into the disparities and inequities within the education system.

In South Korea, the socio-economic status of a family significantly affects the educational opportunities available to their children. Families with higher incomes and greater financial resources are more likely to afford the costs associated with Hagwon attendance. These costs can include tuition fees, registration fees, and additional expenses for materials and resources. Consequently, students from wealthier families have greater access to the personalized instruction and intensive preparation offered by Hagwons, which can enhance their academic performance and increase their chances of gaining admission to prestigious universities.

Conversely, students from lower-income families may face significant barriers to

accessing Hagwon education. The high costs associated with Hagwons can be prohibitive, limiting the ability of these families to provide their children with supplementary educational support. As a result, these students may not benefit from the additional instruction and resources that Hagwons provide, potentially affecting their academic outcomes and future opportunities.

The socio-economic distribution of Hagwon attendees highlights the disparities in access to private tutoring. Research indicates that a significant proportion of Hagwon students come from middle- to upper-class families. These families prioritize education and are willing to invest considerable resources to ensure their children's academic success. In contrast, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are underrepresented in Hagwons, reflecting the financial challenges and constraints they face.

The following figure illustrates the socio-economic distribution of Hagwon attendees, showcasing the proportion of students from different income brackets who attend these private tutoring centers.

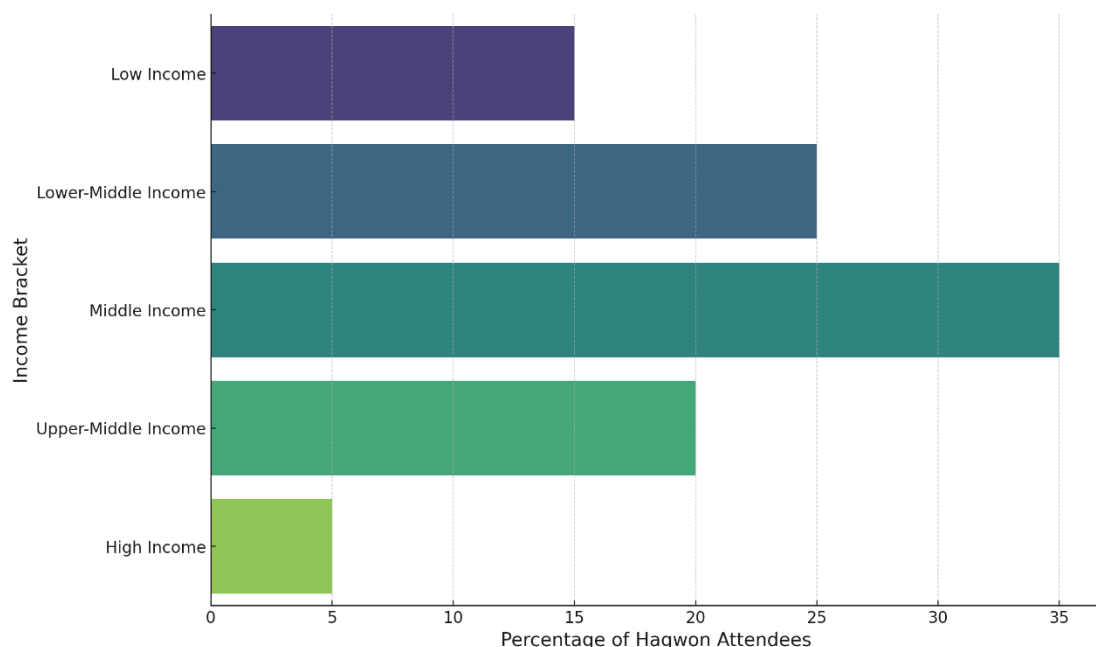


Figure 1. Socio-economic distribution of Hagwon attendees

This Figure reveals that the majority of Hagwon attendees come from middle and upper-middle income families, while students from low and lower-middle income families are less likely to

attend these private tutoring centers. The disparity in attendance rates underscores the financial barriers that limit access to Hagwons for students from less affluent backgrounds.

The socio-economic background of Hagwon students not only impacts individual academic outcomes but also reflects broader societal inequities. The reliance on private tutoring in South Korea exacerbates existing disparities in educational access and achievement, creating a system where wealthier students have a distinct advantage. Addressing these inequities requires a comprehensive approach that includes policies aimed at reducing the financial burden of private education and increasing support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In conclusion, the socio-economic background of students attending Hagwons plays a critical role in shaping their educational experiences and outcomes. While Hagwons provide valuable supplementary education, their high costs limit access for lower-income families, perpetuating socio-economic disparities in academic achievement. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing policies and interventions that promote equitable access to quality education for all students.

2.2 Parental Motivations and Expectations

Parental motivations and expectations play a crucial role in the decision to enroll children in Hagwons. In South Korea, education is often seen as a key determinant of future success and socio-economic mobility, and parents are deeply invested in their children's academic achievements. This cultural emphasis on education drives many parents to seek additional academic support through Hagwons.

One of the primary motivations for parents is the desire to enhance their children's academic performance. Given the highly competitive nature of the South Korean education system, parents often feel that the regular school curriculum is insufficient to secure top grades and ensure admission to prestigious universities. Hagwons offer specialized tutoring that can help students excel in subjects that are critical for standardized tests and college entrance exams. Parents believe that the intensive and focused instruction provided by Hagwons will give their children a competitive edge.

Another significant motivation is the preparation for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), which is a pivotal exam in South Korea. The CSAT scores are a major factor in university admissions, and high scores can open doors to elite universities and better career opportunities. Parents view Hagwons as

essential for rigorous CSAT preparation, as these centers offer practice tests, strategies, and targeted lessons aimed at maximizing students' performance.

Parental expectations are also shaped by social norms and peer influence. In many communities, there is a strong cultural expectation that children will attend Hagwons, and parents may feel pressured to conform to this norm. Seeing other children attend Hagwons can create a sense of urgency and competition among parents, who fear that their children might be left behind if they do not receive similar supplementary education.

Additionally, parents expect Hagwons to provide a structured and disciplined learning environment. Regular schools may not always be able to offer personalized attention due to large class sizes and limited resources. Hagwons, on the other hand, can tailor their teaching methods to individual student needs, offering more interactive and engaging lessons that can address specific academic weaknesses.

Financial considerations also play a role in shaping parental motivations and expectations. While Hagwons can be expensive, many parents view this as a worthwhile investment in their children's future. The potential long-term benefits of better educational outcomes and improved career prospects often justify the immediate financial burden.

In summary, the motivations and expectations of parents in South Korea to enroll their children in Hagwons are driven by a combination of academic aspirations, cultural norms, and the desire for personalized education. Parents are willing to invest significant time and resources to ensure their children receive the best possible support to succeed in a highly competitive educational landscape.

3. Academic Outcomes of Hagwon Attendance

3.1 Comparison of Academic Performance

The impact of Hagwon attendance on academic performance is a topic of significant interest within the context of South Korean education. Numerous studies have been conducted to compare the academic outcomes of students who attend Hagwons with those who do not. The findings generally indicate that students who participate in Hagwon programs tend to perform better academically than their peers who rely solely on regular school instruction.

Research analyzing the average test scores of students who attended Hagwons versus those who did not provides valuable insights into this comparison. Data collected from a sample of high school students preparing for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) — a crucial exam for university admissions in South Korea — reveals that students attending Hagwons often achieve higher scores than non-attendees.

Students attending Hagwons benefit from several key factors that contribute to their improved academic performance. First, Hagwons often provide more individualized and focused instruction compared to regular schools, allowing students to receive tailored support in areas where they may be struggling. Additionally, Hagwons offer extensive practice exams, targeted lessons, and study strategies specifically designed to improve performance on standardized tests like the CSAT. This focused preparation helps students become more adept at handling the format and content of these critical exams. Furthermore, students attending Hagwons typically spend more hours studying each week compared to their peers, leading to a deeper understanding of the material and better retention of knowledge. This additional study time is a significant factor in their enhanced academic performance. Finally, the structured and disciplined environment of Hagwons, combined with smaller class sizes, creates a more conducive atmosphere for learning. This setting allows for more effective teaching and learning interactions.

While the benefits of Hagwon attendance are evident in terms of higher test scores, it is also important to consider potential drawbacks. The intense pressure and long hours associated with Hagwon attendance can lead to increased stress and burnout among students. Moreover, the high costs of Hagwon tuition can exacerbate socio-economic disparities, as not all families can afford these supplementary education services.

In conclusion, the statistical comparison of academic performance between Hagwon attendees and non-attendees demonstrates that private tutoring centers can significantly enhance students' academic outcomes. However, this advantage comes with challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the well-being of students and equitable access to educational resources.

3.2 Long-Term Academic Benefits

While the immediate benefits of Hagwon attendance, such as improved test scores and better grades, are well-documented, it is also essential to consider the long-term academic benefits that these private tutoring centers provide. The long-term impacts of Hagwon attendance extend beyond high school and can significantly influence students' academic trajectories and future opportunities.

One of the primary long-term benefits of Hagwon attendance is increased access to prestigious universities. In South Korea, admission to top-tier universities is highly competitive and largely dependent on performance in standardized tests like the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). Students who attend Hagwons often perform better on these exams due to the intensive preparation and personalized instruction they receive. As a result, they are more likely to gain admission to highly regarded universities, which can open doors to numerous academic and professional opportunities.

Another long-term benefit is the development of effective study habits and academic discipline. The rigorous and structured environment of Hagwons helps students develop strong study skills, time management abilities, and a disciplined approach to learning. These skills are not only beneficial for excelling in high school but also serve students well in university and beyond. The ability to manage time effectively and study efficiently is crucial for academic success in higher education, where students must often juggle multiple courses and responsibilities.

Additionally, the confidence and self-efficacy gained through successful performance in Hagwon programs can have lasting effects. Students who achieve high scores and improve their academic performance through Hagwon attendance often develop a stronger sense of self-confidence in their academic abilities. This confidence can motivate them to pursue challenging academic goals and persist in the face of difficulties, leading to continued academic success in the long run.

Hagwon attendance can also foster a lifelong love of learning and intellectual curiosity. By providing students with engaging and challenging educational experiences, Hagwons can ignite a passion for learning that extends

beyond the classroom. This enthusiasm for knowledge can encourage students to seek out further educational opportunities, participate in advanced courses, and engage in research or academic projects.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the long-term benefits of Hagwon attendance are not uniformly experienced by all students. The intense pressure and high expectations associated with Hagwon attendance can lead to burnout and mental health issues for some students, potentially hindering their long-term academic success. Moreover, the financial burden of Hagwon tuition can be a significant obstacle for lower-income families, limiting their children's access to these long-term benefits.

In summary, while Hagwon attendance provides immediate academic advantages, its long-term benefits are equally significant. Increased access to prestigious universities, the development of effective study habits, enhanced self-confidence, and a lifelong love of learning are some of the enduring advantages that can result from attending Hagwons. Nonetheless, it is crucial to address the associated challenges to ensure that all students can reap these long-term benefits without undue stress or financial strain.

4. Psychological and Social Impacts

4.1 Mental Health and Well-Being

4.1.1 Assessment of Stress, Anxiety, and Other Mental Health Issues Related to Hagwon Attendance

The rigorous and highly competitive nature of the South Korean education system, exacerbated by the prevalence of Hagwons, can have significant psychological impacts on students. While Hagwons provide academic benefits, they also contribute to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues among students.

One of the primary mental health concerns associated with Hagwon attendance is the high level of stress that students experience. The

demanding schedule of attending regular school classes during the day and Hagwon sessions in the evening leaves little time for rest and relaxation. This intense workload can lead to chronic stress, which negatively affects students' physical and mental health. The constant pressure to perform well academically and meet high expectations from parents and teachers further exacerbates this stress.

Anxiety is another prevalent issue among students who attend Hagwons. The fear of failure and the high stakes associated with standardized tests like the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) contribute to elevated levels of anxiety. Students may worry about their performance on exams, their ability to get into prestigious universities, and their future career prospects. This anxiety can manifest in various ways, including sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, and physical symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches.

In addition to stress and anxiety, students attending Hagwons may experience other mental health issues such as depression and burnout. The relentless focus on academic achievement can lead to feelings of hopelessness and a lack of motivation, particularly if students perceive that their efforts are not yielding the desired results. Burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion and a sense of detachment, is also common among students who are subjected to prolonged periods of intense study and pressure.

To illustrate the mental health impacts of Hagwon attendance, a survey was conducted among high school students who attend these private tutoring centers. The survey assessed various mental health indicators, including levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. The results, summarized in Figure 2, provide a snapshot of the psychological challenges faced by students in this highly competitive educational environment.

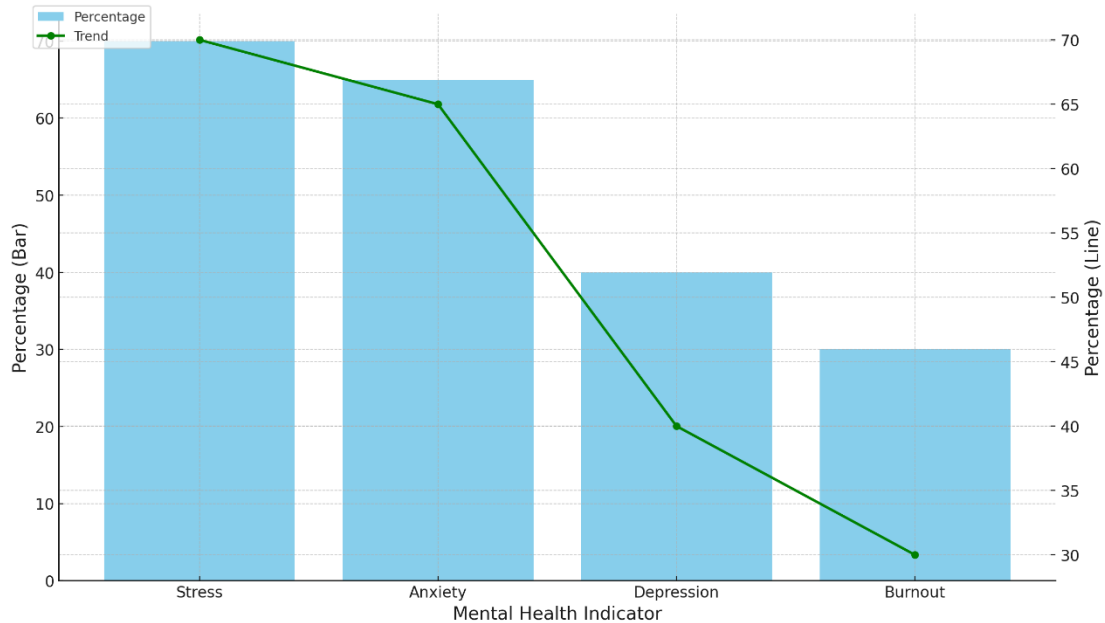


Figure 2. Survey results on mental health indicators for students attending Hagwon

The survey revealed that a significant proportion of students attending Hagwons experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Approximately 70% of respondents reported feeling stressed most of the time, while 65% indicated experiencing frequent anxiety. Additionally, 40% of students reported symptoms of depression, and 30% exhibited signs of burnout. These findings underscore the substantial psychological burden that Hagwon attendance places on students.

In response to these mental health challenges, it is crucial to implement measures that support the well-being of students. Schools and Hagwons can play a pivotal role by providing mental health resources, such as counseling services and stress management programs. Encouraging a balanced approach to education that includes time for extracurricular activities, hobbies, and rest is also essential. Parents and educators should be aware of the signs of stress and anxiety in students and take proactive steps to address these issues.

While Hagwons offer significant academic benefits, they also contribute to considerable psychological stress and anxiety among students. The high expectations and intense pressure associated with Hagwon attendance can lead to various mental health issues, including depression and burnout. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes mental health support, balanced

educational practices, and increased awareness among parents and educators.

4.2 Social Life and Extracurricular Activities

The intensive academic focus and demanding schedules associated with Hagwon attendance can significantly impact students' social lives and participation in extracurricular activities. While Hagwons provide academic benefits, they often come at the cost of reducing the time students have for social interactions, leisure activities, and personal development outside of academics.

Hagwon schedules typically extend well into the evening, leaving students with little free time after regular school hours. This extended study time means that students often have to sacrifice social activities, family time, and relaxation. The lack of balance between academic responsibilities and personal life can lead to feelings of isolation and social withdrawal. Students may find it challenging to maintain friendships and engage in social activities that are crucial for their emotional and social development.

Participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, arts, music, and clubs, is also adversely affected by the time commitments required by Hagwons. These activities play a vital role in developing well-rounded individuals by fostering teamwork, leadership skills, creativity, and physical fitness. However, the intense focus

on academic achievement means that students attending Hagwons often have to forgo these opportunities. This can limit their personal growth and reduce their chances of developing diverse skills and interests.

Moreover, the pressure to excel academically can lead students to prioritize Hagwon attendance over other aspects of their lives. Parents and educators often emphasize the importance of academic success, reinforcing the notion that extracurricular activities are secondary to academic achievements. This cultural emphasis on academic performance can discourage students from exploring and pursuing their passions and hobbies.

The social implications of Hagwon attendance are further compounded by the competitive atmosphere it fosters. The constant comparison of academic performance among peers can create a sense of rivalry rather than camaraderie. Students may feel compelled to compete with their friends for higher grades and better test scores, which can strain relationships and reduce the sense of community and support among peers.

To address these challenges, it is essential to promote a more balanced approach to education that values both academic and non-academic pursuits. Schools and parents should encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities and allocate time for social interactions and leisure. Recognizing the importance of holistic development, educators can integrate opportunities for physical, creative, and social activities within the school curriculum.

While Hagwon attendance can enhance academic performance, it often negatively impacts students' social lives and participation in extracurricular activities. The demanding schedules and intense academic focus leave little room for personal development outside of academics. To ensure the well-rounded development of students, it is crucial to strike a balance between academic responsibilities and opportunities for social interaction, leisure, and extracurricular involvement.

5. Policy Implications and Recommendations

The extensive use of Hagwons in South Korea's education system raises important policy implications and necessitates thoughtful recommendations to address the associated challenges. While Hagwons provide significant academic benefits, their prevalence also

highlights issues of equity, mental health, and the overall quality of education. Policymakers must consider these factors to create a more balanced and inclusive educational environment.

5.1 Current Policy Landscape

South Korea has implemented several policies aimed at regulating Hagwons and mitigating their negative impacts. These policies include measures to cap Hagwon operating hours, limit tuition fees, and increase transparency regarding their educational practices. Despite these efforts, the high demand for private tutoring and the deeply ingrained cultural emphasis on academic success have made it difficult to enforce these regulations effectively.

Additionally, the government has introduced initiatives to improve the quality of public education and reduce the reliance on private tutoring. These initiatives include enhancing teacher training, revising curricula to be more engaging and comprehensive, and investing in educational technology. However, the persistent pressure to excel academically and gain admission to prestigious universities continues to drive the demand for Hagwons.

5.2 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

To address the challenges associated with Hagwon attendance and create a more equitable and supportive educational environment, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) **Enhancing Public Education:** Invest in the public education system to reduce the disparity between public schools and private tutoring centers. This includes improving teacher training, reducing class sizes, and incorporating more personalized and student-centered teaching methods. By strengthening public education, students may feel less compelled to seek additional tutoring.
- 2) **Mental Health Support:** Implement comprehensive mental health programs in schools to address the stress and anxiety associated with academic pressure. Schools should provide counseling services, stress management workshops, and regular mental health check-ins to support students' well-being. Educators and parents should be trained to recognize signs of stress and mental health issues in

students.

- 3) **Balancing Academic and Extracurricular Activities:** Promote a balanced approach to education that values both academic achievement and personal development. Schools should offer a wide range of extracurricular activities and ensure that students have sufficient time to engage in them. Encouraging participation in sports, arts, and other non-academic pursuits can foster a more well-rounded and healthier student body.
- 4) **Equitable Access to Educational Resources:** Address socio-economic disparities by providing financial assistance to low-income families for educational expenses, including Hagwon fees if necessary. Scholarships, grants, and subsidies can help ensure that all students have access to the same educational opportunities regardless of their financial background.
- 5) **Regulating Hagwon Practices:** Strengthen the enforcement of existing regulations on Hagwon operating hours and tuition fees. Implement stricter penalties for non-compliance and establish a transparent system for monitoring and reporting violations. Additionally, promote greater collaboration between public schools and Hagwons to ensure consistency in educational standards and practices.
- 6) **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, the value of a balanced education, and the potential drawbacks of excessive reliance on private tutoring. These campaigns can help shift cultural attitudes and reduce the societal pressure on students to achieve academic excellence at all costs.
- 7) **Research and Evaluation:** Conduct ongoing research to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and initiatives aimed at reducing the reliance on Hagwons and improving student well-being. Collect data on student outcomes, mental health, and educational equity to inform future policy decisions and ensure continuous improvement.

While Hagwons play a significant role in South Korea's education system, their prevalence raises critical policy issues that need to be addressed. By enhancing public education, providing mental health support, promoting a balanced approach to learning, ensuring equitable access to resources, regulating Hagwon practices, and raising public awareness, policymakers can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. These recommendations aim to foster the holistic development of students, ensuring they thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

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