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Welfare Receipt and Out-of-school Time Use among Adolescents: Evidence from China

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This study uses the baseline data of China Education Panel Survey (CEPS) conducted during the 2013-2014 academic year to investigate the relationship between welfare receipt and adolescent out-of-school time use patterns in China. Using a propensity score matching method, we find that welfare receipt was associated with reduced time spent on various study activities and increased screen time for both urban and rural adolescents. Welfare receipt was also associated with increased time spent on home care and housework for urban adolescents but not for their rural peers. These main result patterns largely held across the 7th and 9th grade cohorts. Analyses based on different cohorts generally show similar findings, except that, for 7th graders in urban areas, Dibao receipt reduced time on enrichment while these effects were positive on their 9th grade counterparts. From a gender perspective, Dibao were more likely to benefit urban girls compared to boys but hurt rural girls. Specifically, in urban areas, Dibao increased girls' time use in potentially productive activities like study and lowered their time on possibly passive activities on screen. On the contrary, the negative effects of Dibao on time use in study were more pronounced for rural girls than boys. These gender differences held consistently for the full sample, 7th graders and 9th graders. Future reforms of Dibao and its supplementary policies and programs need to consider how best to promote both the economic and holistic wellbeing of the receiving families and the adolescents in it.