

The Impact of Poverty on Participation
In Extracurricular Activities

by

Randi J. Burkhardt

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine if poverty negatively impacts participation in extracurricular activities based on student responses. A 5 question survey was given anonymously to 279 middle school students to determine if their perspectives supported research. Results of this descriptive study were not in alignment with research. There were not a significant number of students who provided cost as the reason why they do not participate, which would have supported the research. Research on this topic should continue because it has been established in previous studies that poverty does have a negative impact on participation of extracurricular activities.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Living in poverty has many negative effects on families physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Children who live in a low income household are more likely to continue living in poverty as adults. Among the many effects of poverty, one in particular is limiting participation in extracurricular activities. An extracurricular activity is any organized activity lead by a leader or coach that takes place outside of the normal school day. This activity can either be sponsored by the school or an outside organization.

Extracurricular activities have many positive effects on individuals. Unfortunately, many activities require fees making it difficult for students to afford if they live in poverty. In order to help increase participation rates it is important to try strategies to cut down costs and provide as much information as possible.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempted to determine if middle school students participate in extracurricular activities and concluded reasons that are limiting their involvement if they do not participate.

Research Question

What is the reported impact or relationship of poverty on students' extra-curricular activity participation?

Operational Definitions

Poverty, as referenced in this research, is defined as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information (Raphael, 2013). Families living in poverty are also described as living in low-income households or in a low socioeconomic status (SES). Poverty is discussed in greater research in Chapter II by explaining many effects it has on children and adults. Since it was not known which students are living in poverty, the instrument used was a 5 question survey and the independent variable would be the survey choices for the students to choose as to why they do not participate in extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular activities are any organized activity that is not held during the normal required school hours. The activities can either be offered by the school after hours or sponsored by an outside organization. The activity can range from athletics to clubs and will have a leader who organizes the times the activity will be held. The extracurricular activity is the dependent variable of this research. If students do not participate in extracurricular activities it will depend on various reasons which are explained in the survey that was completed by students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

It seems logical to think that living in poverty makes it difficult for children to participate in extracurricular activities. This review of literature will explore how living in poverty can affect participation in extracurricular activities and offers methods to encourage participation in activities by children living in poverty. This literature review will explain what poverty is, the impact poverty has on children, interventions to help families in poverty, the affordability of activities, factors limiting participation in activities, interventions to increase access to activities, and the impact of limited participation in extracurricular activities.

Poverty

Poverty is a clear threat to human and social development, health and well-being. Poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information (Raphael, 2013). Poverty prevents families from being able to eat a healthy diet, participate in activities and hobbies they enjoy, and socialize in outside settings. Living in poverty presents a chronic stress for children and their families and is associated with achievement problems and a risk for social problems and poor health (Engle & Black, 2008). While poverty has many effects, one is the exclusion of activities. Living in poverty takes away the opportunity to do activities because one cannot afford to participate (Raphael, 2013).

Participation in after school activities provides opportunities for positive growth and development. Unfortunately, youth living in low-income households participate in activities at lower rates. The number of children left unsupervised after school is increasing for single-parent

households and dual-earner families. This time spent with no structure or supervision increases risk behaviors and poorer outcomes for youth (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). Extracurricular activities continue to have a growing interest in potential participation. Extracurricular activities include activities that are school run or activities that are organized outside of the school environment, which include sports, arts, and clubs. However, the cost of running extracurricular programs has risen steeply (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007), and many public schools now charge students extra money to participate. For example, a study completed by Hoff and Mitchell showed that 34 states had at least some schools charging fees for extracurricular participation. Hoff and Mitchell stated that some school districts have raised fees from \$15 to \$50 a year in school districts in Maine, and at the high end on the West Coast, some sports are as high as \$1,500.

The high costs to play a sport cause negative consequences and barriers to participate for under privileged families (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). Students in poverty lack hope, but providing them with goals and developing strategies to increase participation and interest in activities will help to provide students with motivation (Sheehan & Rall, 2011). Engaging in sports is important because it provides a way to let out energy in a positive direction and to show school pride (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). The dilemma is how to encourage these students to participate in activities, which will lead to their future success, and make such activities accessible for low-income students. According to the 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's Report, the rate of physical inactivity for Americans with annual household incomes of \$15,000 was 41% compared to 17.3% for those with annual household incomes of \$50,000 and above (Levine, 2009). Living in poverty makes it difficult for children to maintain physical activity levels because of limited resources. Higher

income families have more resources and options when it comes to allowing their children to participate in an organized activity.

Impact of Poverty on Children

Poverty not only affects participation in extracurricular activities, but also children's daily lives. As children get older and become adults, they are more likely to live in poverty as adults if they did so as children (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). Research shows that kids who are born in families living in poverty and live more than half their childhood in poverty are more likely to drop out of high school, have teen pregnancies, and have inconsistent employment records than those not born in poverty. Dropping out of high school and teen pregnancies are linked to weaker work habits and higher rates of adult poverty. Living in poverty has been linked to lower academic achievement and low IQ scores and have been linked to behavioral problems. Children who live in poverty for more than half their childhood are 90 percent more likely to enter adulthood without completing high school. The results of living young in poverty and not gaining a high school education can lead to serious future economic difficulties. During childhood, kids' bodies are maturing. Childhood poverty is a contributing factor to chronic stress levels in children. These can impact brain development and result in lower levels of working memory. Living in a toxic stress environment alters the way the brain will develop. According to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, toxic stress in early childhood leads to permanent changes in the structure and function of the brain. Unfortunately, these brain alterations can create a weak foundation for learning, behavior, and health that impedes their future success.

Interventions to Help Families in Poverty

Many states in the United States are increasing their overall poverty rate. Since the year 2000, the percent of children living in poverty has increased in 32 states, decreased in 13 states, and has stayed stable in 5 states (Colorado Children's Campaign, 2008). There is no single reason for the rise in poverty; however, factors such as immigration increase in single mother births, family history, and others can contribute to this trend. There are several programs that are provided by the government to help families who are living in poverty. These programs help low-income families by providing financial support for everyday necessities, which allows them to save their income for other life activities.

Moving the Needle on Poverty is a program originated in Colorado designed to lift individuals, families, and communities out of poverty (Colorado Children's Campaign, 2008). Many states are choosing to set specific and measurable goals to reduce poverty rates. Of the 50 states in the United States, Maryland is among the few who has been able to decrease their percentage of children living in poverty. Maryland's tax system does more than other states to help families living in poverty. For a two-parent family of four, there is no tax due on annual earnings below \$31,000. For working families, Maryland provides a refundable earned income tax credit. A family of four with an income that puts them in poverty receives a tax refund to supplement their earnings. Maryland's tax system creates less of a burden on low-income families than most other states.

Child care is often difficult for families living in poverty. Child-care subsidies are offered to increase care for children for working parents living in poverty (Gassman-Pines & Hill, 2013). Parents living in poverty are given funds to purchase child care when they require it. These funds help to reduce childcare costs for families in poverty, which will help to improve their financial

status. Providing funds for child care has also been shown to decrease mental health issues with parents because it helps to lower their stress levels. Finding proper childcare can be extremely difficult for families, especially ones in poverty; providing families with financial support can help to eliminate an extra stress factor.

Living in poverty obviously creates a burden on families to provide nutrition for their children. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest food assistance program in the United States. SNAP is a program designed to provide cash benefits only on food for low-income households (Gassman-Pines & Hill, 2013). The SNAP program helps families' economic well-being by providing assistance for nutrition so families can focus on other household necessities. This program helps to decrease food insecurity, which occurs in families who are living on poverty that have limited food sources.

Families living in poverty often are unable to provide health insurance to their families due to not being employed or not being able to afford it. There are two programs that are designed to help low-income families that are not able to afford health insurance, which are Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Medicaid is the primary program that provides health insurance to poverty families, and CHIP supports low-income children whose family income is too high to qualify for Medicaid (Gassman-Pines & Hill, 2013). The two programs help increase outpatient and preventative healthcare services and help families to receive prescription medicine. Providing health care options to families in poverty helps to improve financial security. Not only do health care services help families financially, they also ensure children are receiving proper medical services, which improves children's physical health by reducing severe illness.

Affordability of Activities

Research demonstrates that income is a significant predictor of whether a child participates in an extracurricular activity. Paying to play extracurricular activities places a financial burden on the students and their families (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). Unfortunately, fees are becoming more popular, especially in areas that cannot afford to support many different organizations. Paying to play has become the new norm at many schools that are short of money (Whitmer, 2013). Charging students to play makes it easier for the schools to offer the activity because they are receiving an income. However, making students pay will decline the participation rate, especially for the children who can't afford it. Paying to play prevents a lot of students in poverty from being able to participate (Hoff & Mitchell, 2006). Low participation rates among economically disadvantaged children and adolescents supports the importance of considering household income as an issue relating to participation rates (Barnett, 2008). Families with a higher income are more likely to provide opportunities for their children to participate in extracurricular activities than families with a lower income. Participation rates among activities are going to vary because of the wide ranging fees each requires. Lower income communities are typically are not going to offer activities that require high fees because there will not be a high interest level. The affordability of the population is going to determine what activities can be offered. Families with a higher income are more able to provide their child with more opportunities to be involved in activities. Lower income families may be forced to only allow their child to pick one or a few activities, if any. This could prevent a child from opportunities to try varied or new activities. If the family is unable to afford the extra expenses, they may be unable to allow their child to participate without assistance. Extra-curricular expenses can be

high, such as equipment, and as a result, participation in sports clubs can be affected by their socioeconomic status. (Golle, Granacher, Hoffmann, Wick, & Muehlbauer, 2014).

Factors Limiting Participation in Extracurricular Activities

There are many factors that limit participation in extracurricular activities, but one key factor is the costs. Costs for activities vary and are used for uniforms, equipment, coaches, referees, and locations to play. It is especially difficult for low-income families to meet these needs. The nature of our society pressures teams into buying the best protective equipment for athletes for safety and status, so many programs are looking for ways to offset the heavy costs of these extracurricular programs (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). Activity fees that exceed \$300 causes the participation rate in school activities to drop by a third or more. Although the fees are for mandatory reasons, it makes it difficult for families to afford, especially when they have children who want to participate in multiple activities.

Parental involvement has been proven to be a key factor in a child's success. When a child wants to participate in activities, the parent is the one who carries the responsibility and manages the involvement (Barnett, 2008). Research shows that participation rates are higher for children whose parents are employed rather than parents who are not employed because without an income, it makes it difficult to afford extra activities. Studies have shown that children living in a low socioeconomic position participate less often in organized sports than those who live in high socioeconomic households (Wijtzes et al., 2014). Commitment, a promise to do something, can be a struggle for families in poverty for various reasons. Not being able to commit to attending events regularly affects children in lower income households because they miss opportunities to develop positive social relationships with their peers. Parents are less likely to have their child in organizations because they may work several jobs and have limited

transportation options that restrict them from engaging in activities (Holt, Kingsley, Tink, & Scherer, 2011).

Another factor related to parental involvement is how many children are in the household. If there are several children in the house, then it will affect the amount of income the family is able to provide for activities. More siblings require more commitment, which creates more difficulty getting each child to his or her activities. Also, it requires more transportation resources, which some families living in poverty are unable to provide. When the parent is unable to afford or commit to transporting the child to and from activities, then the likelihood and quality of participating decreases (Barnett, 2008).

Many families in poverty live in one-parent households, which makes it extremely difficult for the one parent or guardian to be able to commit to extra activities. Children in dual parent homes are more likely to participate in activities than single parent households (Barnett, 2008). Dual parent households allow one parent to be able to take the child to the activity while the other can work on something else such as work. If it is a one parent household and the parent has to work nights, he or she will be unable to transport the child to the activity. One parent is often unable to transport his or her child or pay for the extra fees when he or she is working and has limited time and resources. Being a single parent is challenging and many cannot allow their children to participate in extra activities because of their limited resources.

Families in poverty may also live in unsafe communities characterized by high density, crime, and few opportunities for academic socialization (Engle & Black, 2008). Families who never feel safe in their community would not participate in any activities outside of school (Howie, Lukacs, Pastor, Reuben, & Mendola, 2010). Children who live in unsafe communities sometimes or never feel safe enough to participate in organized activities. The families'

neighborhoods have a direct impact on the child's development in extracurricular activities. When living in unsafe areas, it's difficult to offer and participate in organized activities because, for example, there are limited locations to hold events.

Interventions to Increase Access to Activities

Ongoing participation in extra-curricular activities is critical for positive outcomes for students. In order to increase participation in activities, it is important to learn how to promote participation. Studies have shown that African Americans participate more in sports, church-based activities, and before and after school programs, but less in student governmental activities than Whites, and Latinos are less likely to participate in activities than non-Latinos (Fredricks, Hackett, & Bregman, 2010).

In order to increase interest in participating, it's important to understand what the youth is interested in. It will differ from communities based off of the ethnicity and environment. Students are going to participate in activities they are good at and are already interested in. Students want to be a part of a program that they feel comfortable in and can spend time with friends. Often, students are going to pick an activity that their friend participates in because it makes them feel safe. Communities and schools should evaluate their population to determine popular activities to offer. However, having a limited income can create barriers because poor communities can't offer as many activities as communities with higher incomes (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). Government and foundation funding to support activities in low-income areas and low-performing schools has significantly increased. Sports club programs offering appealing and affordable arrangements to the community could be a good means to increase physical fitness in children (Golle et al., 2014). For instance, some organizations have fee waivers for those who cannot afford to pay (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). The community also can help because

the facility in which the organizations meet or play may be supported by tax dollars, so fees could possibly be reduced.

One example of an effective after school program is the Boys and Girls Club of America, one of the oldest leading community based youth development organizations that is funded by the federal government to help families in need. Many children do not have a place to go after school, so programs like the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) are organized around the nation to provide a variety of activities for children. The mission for these clubs is to provide a positive and safe place for youth while being supervised by caring adults (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). The BGCA provide programs in many areas to promote interest in all children, such as leadership development, education development, health and life skills, the arts, and sports and recreation. The BGCA promote safety in children by providing them with a safe environment to go after school. Students who participate in the BGCA develop positive friendships and feel like it is a second home for support (Fredricks et al., 2010).

In order to help afford extra costs, teams will often look into fundraising, organized activity to raise money, for their teams. One fundraising tool is PlanetHS, which works with schools and local businesses to be paid sponsors (Whitmer, 2013). Fundraising is a great tool because it will help the students who cannot afford the expensive equipment and uniforms. Fundraising techniques should be tried more often to help out local sports teams be successful. Many local businesses are willing to sponsor teams, which will help to pay for uniforms or more if they are asked. Fundraising and asking for sponsors will help to cover costs for all athletes on the team so no one is left out.

Impact of Limited Participation

Sports and recreational activities help promote physical health and academic achievement. Participation in extracurricular activities promotes healthy physical, social, and psychological lifestyles (Marlier et al., 2015). Physical activity is extremely important for everyone's health, but physical inactivity is most prevalent among low-income families (Levine, 2009). In addition to missing out on the social benefits of being on a sports team, limiting opportunities to participate in sports due to costs can negatively affect children by making them unable or less likely to be physically active (Barnett, 2008). Participating in extracurricular activities helps promote physical wellness and healthy habits. Practicing good physical health helps to promote positive self-esteem, self-control, and a sense of direction (Kientzler, 2008). Physical wellness can be achieved from personal fitness activities and through sports at school, club, or recreational levels. Physical inactivity can increase stress, obesity, and type II diabetes, which would result in immediate health interventions for children.

Along with the physical health benefits, there are many ways extracurricular activities improve a child's mental, emotional, and social health. In both childhood and adolescence, organized activity participation has been correlated with positive academic, psychological, and social adjustment for low-income youth (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). When children do not participate in organized activities, they lose the ability to gain these important life skills. It has been found that children who participate in sports and clubs have higher social skills than those who do not participate in an activity outside of school (Howie, et al., 2010). Sports participation helps to increase a child's social integration, teamwork and social skills, and confidence (Wijtzes et al., 2014). Organized activities allow a child to get used to not only working with other peers,

but also other adults. It is a great way for youth to get comfortable listening to directions from other adults and also allows them to interact with other kids their age.

Extracurricular activities challenge students to manage multiple daily events. However, living in poverty often prevents children from being able to develop these responsibilities. Extracurricular activities provide many benefits including responsibility, independence, and communication skills, as well as opportunities for exercise and socialization in a safe and supervised setting (Grudeva, 2010). Students have to ensure they are achieving academically in order to be able to partake in extra activities. Extracurricular activities have also been shown to enhance attendance, graduation rates, and test scores (Hoff & Mitchell, 2007). This allows a child to learn how to juggle many life tasks such as school, homework, and their activity. Without organized activities children lack the responsibility of learning how to cope with the demands of life.

Poverty can also prevent them from being able to do something enjoyable with their friends, leading to unhealthy emotional health. Depression is high in families in poverty, and activity participation has shown to improve mental health and reduce symptoms of depression (Marlier et al., 2015). Organized activities allow kids to participate in activities they enjoy to help prevent depression. Organized activities also help to prevent children from partaking in risky behaviors. Extracurricular activities are shown to lower alcohol and drug use in adolescents (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2012). Studies show poor students who participate in sports have been found to participate less in juvenile crime, have a sense of connectedness to the school, exhibit increased self-esteem, and created positive social networks they might otherwise not have (Hoff & Mitchell, 2006).

Conclusion

Living in poverty makes it difficult for families to allow their children to participate in extracurricular activities for various reasons. Unfortunately, when children are unable to participate in organized activities, they miss out on opportunities to help improve their physical and social skills. Activities also allow children to develop new friendships, especially ones outside of their school. However, when children do not participate, they are not able to gain new friendships and also don't have the opportunity to work with different adults. Participation in extracurricular activities provides many benefits and more needs to be done to encourage and make possible participation for children living in poverty. Research on the effects of these efforts is warranted as participation in extracurricular activities promotes healthy physical, social, and psychological lifestyles.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The goal of this research was to investigate the relationship between poverty and participation in extracurricular activities for middle school students. The students were given a survey to complete to determine if they participate in extracurricular activities or not. If the student responded with not participating they were asked to explain why they do not participate.

Design

The type of design for this research was descriptive because it is illegal for school staff to have knowledge of the students' income levels. The survey was intended to see how many students participate in extracurricular activities or not without any knowledge of the student's income level. In order to determine how many students participate in extracurricular activities, a 5 question anonymous survey was created for each student to complete. Any student that does not participate in extracurricular activities was asked to circle reasons explaining why.

The variables for this research were participation in extracurricular activities and the reasons that students do not participate in extracurricular activities. All students received the same survey to complete one time. There was no follow up survey necessary for this research.

Participants

The research was conducted in an Anne Arundel County Public middle school. The middle school is located in the Northwest region of Anne Arundel County and has an enrollment of 968 students in 6th- 8th grade. Of the entire school population, about 21% are on Free and Reduced Meals. The school is located in a growing populated area of both home owners and

rentals. This school is in an area where transfers are common because of the military base nearby. For this research, 279 students in diverse heterogeneously grouped classes were used. Of the 279 students, 136 were male and 143 were females. Of the male group, there were 45 6th graders, 56 7th graders, and 35 8th graders. Their ages ranged from 11-14 with 20 eleven year olds, 52 twelve year olds, 46 thirteen year olds, and 18 fourteen year olds. The females consisted of 31 6th graders, 68 7th graders, and 44 8th graders. Their ages consisted of 18 eleven year olds, 45 twelve year olds, 65 thirteen year olds, and 15 fourteen year olds.

Instrument

One instrument was used to determine if the students participate in extracurricular activities. The survey was created and consisted of 5 questions for the students to complete. The survey was completed during regular class time and was done anonymously. Question 1 on the survey asked if the students are male or female. Question 2 asked for the student's grade level and question 3 asked for their age. Question 4 was a yes or no question asking if the student participates in extracurricular activities. Question 5 was only to be completed if the student answered 'no' in question 4. If the student answered 'no' in question 4 they were to choose up to 3 reasons as to why they do not participate. The choices for the reasons consisted of too expensive, no transportation to and from the activity, parents work evenings/nights, no interest in participating, lack of information on activities, or other and were asked to fill in their response if they selected this choice. The main reason for this survey was to see how many of the students participate and to determine reasons why they do not.

Directions: Please answer the following questions to your best ability. The survey will be anonymous so please answer honestly.

- 1) Circle your gender.
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
- 2) What grade are you in?
 - a. 6th Grade
 - b. 7th Grade
 - c. 8th Grade
- 3) What is your age? _____
- 4) Do you participate in extra-curricular activities? (Example: sports, clubs, etc.)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 5) If you answered no in question 4 please circle your reason(s). You may choose up to 3 reasons.
 - a. Too expensive
 - b. No transportation to and from the activity
 - c. Parents work evenings/nights
 - d. No interest in participating
 - e. Lack of information on activities
 - f. Other: _____

Procedure

The research process began in March 2016 after the survey was created. Before giving the survey a letter was sent home to each student to give to their parents or guardians. The letter explained what the survey entailed and if there was any reason the parent/guardian did not want their child to partake in the survey they were to sign the bottom portion of the letter and return to the school. There was only one letter that was returned for their child to not participate in the survey. The group of students that participated in the survey was the remaining students. The survey started a week after the letter was sent home to give time for parent questions. The school operates on an A/B/C day schedule so the survey was complete over the course of three days so

every student had the opportunity to complete one. The survey was given to each student in each class period. Before completing the survey the students were reminded that it was anonymous to encourage students to answer honestly. Students were to answer questions 1-4 and if they answered 'no' to question 4 they were to answer question 5. Question 5 was used to determine why students do not participate in extracurricular activities by circling up to 3 reasons.

The students were monitored through teacher observation during the survey. The survey took only approximately five to seven minutes to complete which included hand out, instructions, completing, and collecting the survey. After all of the surveys were completed the results were then broken down into categories. The categories used to view the results were the number of males versus females, grade for each gender, age for each gender, how many participate or do not for each gender, and what were the reasoning for not participating for each gender. For each category tallies were used to determine how many students represented each category.

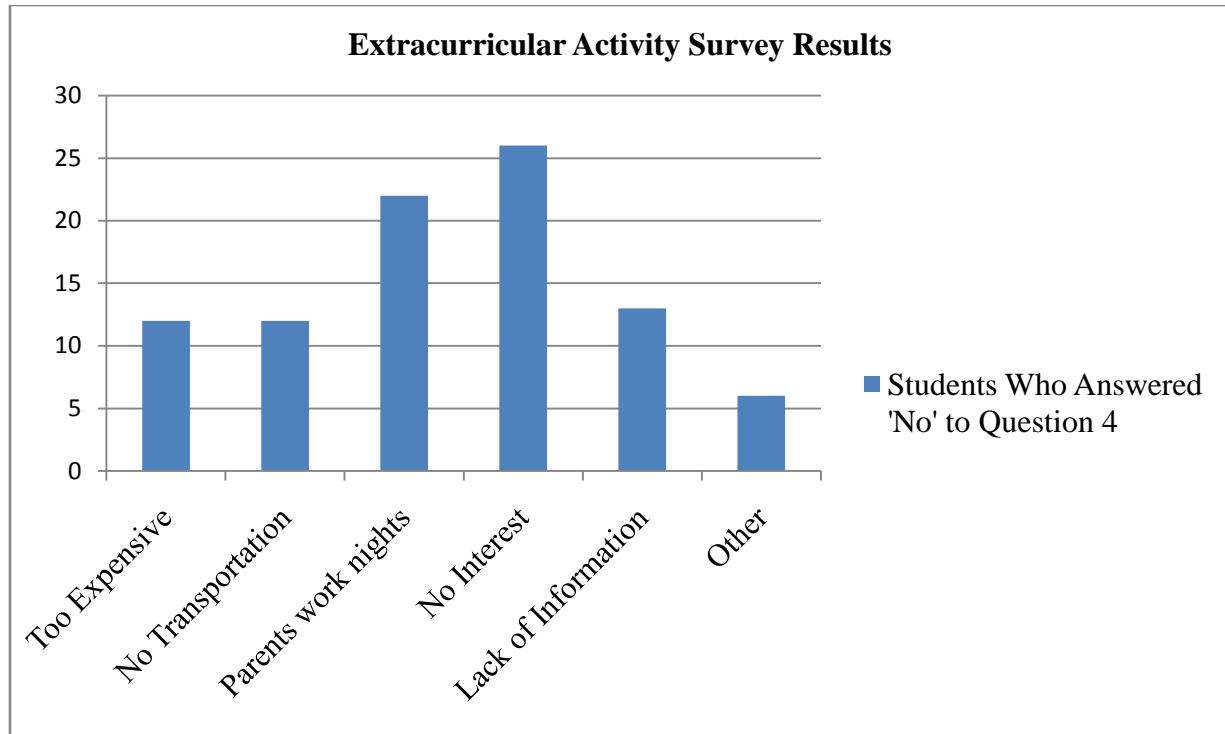
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was used to determine how many middle school students at an Anne Arundel County Public School participate in extracurricular activities and if not what are their reasons. In the research it has been shown that cost and transportation were among other reasons as to why students would not be able to participate in activities. The purpose of this study was to determine if cost was a leading factor as to why students do not participate in extracurricular activities. Students were to pick up to three reasons why they do not participate in activities which included cost, no transportation, parents working evening/nights, no interest, lack of information, or they could write in another reason.

The results showed that majority of the students who completed the survey participate in some sort of extracurricular activity. The survey was given to 279 students which consisted of 136 males and 143 females. The males consisted of 45 6th graders, 56 7th graders, and 35 8th graders. The males' ages ranged from 11-14 with 20 eleven year olds, 52 twelve year olds, 46 thirteen year olds, and 18 fourteen year olds. The females consisted of 31 6th graders, 68 7th graders, and 44 8th graders. Their ages consisted of 18 eleven year olds, 45 twelve year olds, 65 thirteen year olds, and 15 fourteen year olds. Out of the 279 students who completed the survey 224 of them answered yes to participating in extracurricular activities. Of the 224 students who said yes 113 were male and 111 were female. There were 55 students who answered no to participating in activities which was broken down into 23 males and 32 females. The results of the extracurricular activity survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1



The top three choices that were most commonly used in question 5 were no interest in participating, parents work nights, and lack of information. The most common answer choice was having no interest in participating which resulted in 28% of the total responses. The second most common answer choice was parents working evenings and nights which totaled 24% of the total responses. The third most common response was not having any information on activities which was 14% of the total responses. The results and their implications will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this descriptive study did not seem to support the research about poverty impacting participation in extracurricular activities. This study showed there were not many students that chose “too expensive” as their reason for not participating in extracurricular activities. While the results showed there was an amount of students who said they don’t participate because of cost, it was not a large amount. Therefore, it was unable to determine if poverty negatively impacts participation rates in the students who completed the survey.

Implications of the Results

The results showed that there was no overwhelming percentage of students that identified that activities were too expensive as their reason not to participate. As shown in Table 1, Extracurricular Activity Survey Results, the most popular response for not participating is having no interest. No interest had 28% of the total responses for not participating. However, only 12 students chose too expensive as their choice for not participating. Out of the six choices too expensive was tied with no transportation as the 4th most popular choice. Since not many students chose expense as an option, it is not possible to say this research can support the idea that poverty negatively impacts whether students participate in extracurricular activities.

Theoretical Consequences

The study that was completed contradicts what research shows about poverty and extracurricular activities. Poverty has many negative effects on individuals and one of them is the limitation of being able to participate in extracurricular activities. Many schools and recreations require a fee for a child to participate in the activity. However, making students pay

prevents a lot of students living in poverty from being able to participate in activities (Hoff & Mitchell, 2006). The low participation rates of students living in low income households supports the importance of considering the household income as a relating issue (Barnett, 2008). However, this study did not support the issue of poverty impacting participation. The students in this survey mostly participate in some sort of extra activity. Out of 279 students only 55 selected that they do not participate in an activity. Also, in this study it was not known how many students were living in poverty at the time of the survey. Therefore, this study is unable to confirm if poverty impacts participation rates and contradicts what research shows.

Threats to Validity

This study has a few threats to validity that are internal and external. An internal threat to the validity would be the execution of the survey. The survey had to be completed anonymously to protect the privacy of the students. Therefore, this study is unable to determine if the students who chose “too expensive” as their reasoning for not participating in extracurricular is because they are living in poverty. If access was given to determine which students are on Free and Reduced Meals, it could have made a better connection to students not participating in extra activities. The option of “too expensive” could have been chosen by a student living in poverty or by a student whose parents don’t value activities and as a result believe it is a waste of money. Also, since the majority of the school is not on Free and Reduced Meals, it is not a good source to support the hypothesis.

An external threat to validity is that the researcher did not survey the entire school. The survey only consisted of 279 students out of 968 students in the middle school. The school only has about 21% of the student population on Free and Reduced Meals. Consequently, there is no way to tell how many of the Free and Reduced Meal students took this survey. In order to have

more accurate results to support the hypothesis, the survey could have only been completed by students who are on Free and Reduced Meals. Limiting the survey to only those students would have given a better understanding of the relationship between living in poverty and not participating in extracurricular activities.

Relationship to Literature

Several other researchers have studied the impact poverty has on participation rates for extracurricular activities. Hoff and Mitchell (2007) agree that paying to participate in activities prevents a lot of students living in poverty from being able to participate. Household incomes largely influence whether a child is going to participate in activities (Barnett, 2008). According to Barnett, lower income families are less likely to provide opportunities to their children to participate in activities than a family who has a high income.

There are many negative effects for children living in poverty and joining extra activities is one of them. Parents who work are more likely to allow their child to participate in activities rather than a family who only has one or no parent working (Barnett, 2008). Families living in poverty cannot afford the extra costs for extra activities, and as a result, it can have negative effects on the child's health. Extracurricular activities help to promote physical, mental, emotional, and social wellness. Children that live in poverty miss out on the health benefits because they cannot afford to participate. Extracurricular activities have many great benefits and unfortunately research has shown that families living in poverty are less likely to provide these opportunities to their children.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study implicate for future research. The results did not prove that the cost was a main reason for why students do not participate in extracurricular activities. Research shows that poverty has a large impact on student participation if they live in poverty. However, this study was unable to make that distinction, which could lead to future research. Also, a future researcher could consider completing a survey to only students who live in poverty. This study was given to 279 middle school students, and it was not possible to know how many actually have a low-income household. As a result, there was not a way to determine if poverty impacted these students. Finally, this study was also only completed in one middle school. A future researcher could survey a variety of schools of all grades to get a better idea. A future researcher would also need to survey different communities to see if a higher income area differs greatly from a lower income area.

Summary

The results of this study show there was no relation between poverty and participation in extracurricular activities. Although there were students who did not participate in activities, the majority of the students said they do participate. Of the 55 students who did not, there were 12 who explained cost was the reason. Previous research suggests that poverty does impact participation in activities because they cannot afford the costs. However, due to the limitations of this study, it was unable to completely agree with the research. More research should be conducted on the impact of poverty and participation. There are many benefits for students who participate in extracurricular activities, and unfortunately many students who live in poverty miss out on those opportunities because they are unable to afford it.

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