

Differential Extracurricular Engagement by Socioeconomic Status: A Quantitative Analysis of Participation Intensity and Perceived Cost Barriers

Naman Soni

numsoni2009@gmail.com

The Ohio State University

Research Article

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Abstract

Extracurricular activities support academic motivation, belonging, and future opportunity, yet students from low-income families often face barriers to joining them. Most research asks whether students participate. This study asks how much they participate and whether cost shapes that involvement. A cross-sectional survey of 74 students from the four public high schools in the Olentangy Local School District measured participation, perceived financial barriers, and the effect of cost on joining activities. Socioeconomic status was measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch and parental education. The analytical sample included 72 students (10 low SES, 62 high SES). Low and high SES students joined a similar number of activities (4.80 and 4.75). Low SES students spent significantly fewer hours per week on them (3.90 and 7.40, $p \approx 0.005$, $r \approx 0.33$). Cost was named as a barrier by 60.0% of low SES students and about 40.3% of high SES students, a difference that was not statistically significant. The findings suggest that inequality in extracurricular involvement is a gap in intensity, not only in access. Schools should look beyond participation rates and address hidden costs and non-monetary barriers.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of inequality related to educational opportunities has become prominent in conversations around student achievement and equality. Schools serve as the foundation for academic learning, yet most social, cognitive, and individual development takes place through participation in extracurricular activities, e.g., clubs, programs, sports and other school-based organizations. A large body of literature shows that participation in extracurricular activities is associated with positive developmental outcomes like improved academic performance, increased socialization, greater physical activity, and civic orientation (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). Given the role that extracurricular activities play in the development of new skills, as well as overall school engagement and future success, disparities in access to extracurricular opportunities pose a significant concern in education.

Due to various factors, students from low-income families tend to face multiple barriers preventing them from participating in extracurricular activities, which creates an “engagement gap” (Snellman et al., 2015). The problem lies in the fact that participation in extracurricular activities is not merely beneficial for its own sake, but has become an essential part of college admission and further education, thus widening disparities in access.

Collectively, research suggests that extracurricular activities could serve to amplify socioeconomic inequalities instead of being an expression of personal preferences only. Socioeconomic status (SES), typically measured through income and parents’ education, is a well-known predictor of educational success (Sirin, 2005). SES is defined in this study using eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch and parental education. The variable will be operationalized as eligibility for free or reduced lunch and parental education, a common proxy in educational research (Sirin, 2005; USDA, 2023).

While prior research has established a relationship between SES and extracurricular participation, much of it focuses on whether students participate rather than how much they participate, the type of activities they choose, or how they experience barriers to access (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Snellman et al., 2015). Large-scale studies often emphasize participation rate, but do not always capture how students perceive financial barriers or how those costs affect their decisions to join activities they are interested in (Snellman et al., 2015). Fewer studies directly ask students whether cost has prevented them from participating, or whether they would be more likely to participate if extracurricular activities were free. This creates a gap in understanding the decision-making process behind participation.

The present study addresses this gap by surveying students about their perception of financial barriers, their experience with access to extracurricular activities, and whether they would participate more if activities were free. In doing so, this study moves beyond participation rates alone to understand how financial barriers shape the depth and accessibility of extracurricular involvement among high school students.

The research question for this study is to examine how SES influences the level, frequency, and type of extracurricular participation among high school students. Specifically, it asks: to what extent do financial barriers shape extracurricular involvement among high school students of different socioeconomic backgrounds?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Educational Outcomes and Socioeconomic Status

Educational outcomes have been found to be heavily influenced by SES, which is commonly measured using income, parents' educational attainment, and occupation. Students with high SES tend to perform better in terms of standardized test scores, and high school graduation rates, and college attendance (Reardon, 2011). Research shows that the achievement gap based on income inequality has widened immensely during recent decades, surpassing the already persistent Black-White achievement gap (Reardon, 2011). The gap stems from the fundamental difference in educational spending that families from different SES groups can afford outside school hours. Garcia & Weiss (2015) show that these inequalities exist even before a child's first day at school since children from lower-income families often demonstrate lower early reading and math skills compared to those from higher-income families. Unfortunately, such disadvantages accompany the disadvantaged students all the way to their academic years, as children from low-income families are more often enrolled in schools with less funding, high teacher turnover, and fewer opportunities for enrichment. Bradley (2022) emphasized that the resulting cost is significant for the US national economy, losing about \$700 billion worth of productivity and talent per year. According to the literature, inequality does not emerge due to poor schooling, but rather as a systematic problem present at all stages of students' education. With more financial resources, families provide protection from any adverse consequences of being in such under-resource learning facilities, hence creating a sort of "safety blanket."

Moreover, Sirin (2005) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of the SES-education correlation and proved that the family level SES is a better predictor of academic success than individual and school-level SES. The results indicate that the socioeconomic situation in the home is the major cause of educational inequalities. Thus, since there are such discrepancies, only educational reform will not suffice to close the gaps; extra resources should be considered. As a whole, these studies show that there is an accumulative nature to socio-economic disparities, which results in structural disadvantages throughout a student's education and career.

2.2 Extracurricular Activities in Student Development

Apart from conventional classes, students engage in extracurricular activities, including sports, clubs, and art-based programs. According to Fredricks & Eccles (2006), longitudinal analysis showed that student engagement in extracurricular activities promotes academic motivation, improved classroom behavior, and higher educational aspirations, independent of previous levels of academic performance. Mars & Kleitman (2022) demonstrate the importance of participation as a crucial factor for the development of positive academic results, rather than being a consequence. For many adolescents extracurricular activity serves as a mediator between education and socialization. These activities enable adolescents to become responsible individuals and learn organizational skills. Other life skills developed by participating in extracurricular activities include leadership skills, teamwork, and ability to control one's emotions. As students participate in activities, they are exposed to opportunities that enhance their skills, knowledge, leadership and craft, which in turn contributes to development of self-efficacy. Higher levels of self-efficacy enable students to manage various challenges in and outside of the classroom. Additionally, studies have shown that extracurricular involvement provides protective benefits like reducing the likelihood of school dropout and engaging in criminal activities, specifically for at-risk youth.

More importantly, extracurricular activities play a significant role in developing the sense of belonging to the school, an important indicator of academic persistence. According to Feldman and Matjasko (2005), one of the key reasons such activities are useful lies in their structured form; it helps to form a healthy peer group and avoid detrimental effects of negative social influences. The sense of belongingness encourages students to devote themselves to studying and develop the idea of being successful scholars. Overall, the existing research suggests that extracurriculars are far from being mere hobbies and play a crucial role in personal development.

2.3 The Engagement Gap: Socioeconomic Disparities in Access

Despite these developmental benefits, participation remains restricted across socioeconomic lines. Snellman et al. (2015) coined the term “engagement gap” to describe the persistent disparity where students in the top socioeconomic quartile participate at significantly higher rates than those in the bottom quartile. This gap is not a static phenomenon; longitudinal data from Meier, Hartmann, and Larson (2018) reveal that these disparities in the frequency and duration of involvement have persisted

for over two decades. Wealthier students are more likely to engage in multiple, resource-intensive activities, while lower-income students often participate sporadically or not at all (Park & Kim, 2023). The roots of this inequality are both structural and institutional. Darling (2005) and Tompsett and Knoseter (2023) documented that students in low-income schools have fewer options to begin with, effectively limiting their extracurricular portfolio regardless of their individual initiative. When a school lacks a variety of clubs or teams, the opportunity cost for participation becomes much higher, making it less likely that a student will choose to engage.

McNeal (1998, 1999) argued that these disparities are also rooted in a combination of family resources like transportation, parental flexibility, and social capital, institutional factors that define the school's overall extracurricular climate. Parents with more financial flexibility are better equipped to navigate the logistical burdens of participation, effectively buying access for their children. In contrast, families without these resources are left to navigate a system that rewards those who have the time and money to commit. Collectively, this research suggests that participation is a class-based resource, where higher-SES students leverage extracurriculars to build the social capital and competitive profiles necessary for future success, essentially turning an opportunity into a structural advantage.

2.4 Financial Barriers and the Costs of Participation

Financial limitations act as one of the leading reasons behind the uneven access to these programs. According to Covay & Carbonaro (2010), the financial cost of engaging in these activities is a significant factor in excluding children from lower-income families. Although some activities are offered by the school, even indirect costs such as transportation, hiring a coach, or the competitive nature of the activity can be too expensive for low-income families (Darling, 2005; Fox et al., 2010). In many cases, this expense is unexpected, resulting in quick disenrollment, ultimately depriving the child of developmental advantages described above. The social context underlying these obstacles was exposed by Lareau (2002), who highlighted that middle-class parents practice “concerted cultivation” in organizing their schedules and finances to facilitate participation, whereas working-class parents are hindered by the rigidity of time and financial insecurity. Consequently, this creates a situation in which the students who could potentially receive the greatest advantages of protection through extracurricular activities are unable to continue participating in them. Schools tend to lack adequate financial assistance structures that would mitigate the cost factor for lower-income students.

In addition, it has been noted recently by Aspen Institute (2021) that there is an increase in financial pressure on children participating in sports, as the cost of such activities has risen to several hundred dollars per season, making participation in such activities less viable for those coming from lower-income backgrounds. As mentioned by Holt et al. (2011) and Tandon et al. (2021), many families of lower economic status have been forced to focus on other essentials at the expense of such programs. Given the existence of such barriers, this suggests that participating in such programs is more of a luxury than a regular part of attending school. Overall, cost is seen to become more than just an entrance fee that determines whether a student can participate, but a barrier that determines how much, as well.

3. Study Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The main aim of this research was to explore the role of financial restrictions on the extent and availability of participation in extracurricular activities; such an aim required research methods that could help bridge the gap between objective data collected from the institutions and subjective experiences of adolescence. For this reason, this study adopted the method of a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to explore the impact of SES on extracurricular participation.

The use of the quantitative method was justified by the ability to objectively measure such parameters as participation frequency and intensity as well as perceived obstacles to involvement in extracurricular activities. According to Creswell (2014), the cross-sectional study is an effective way to look at patterns among a certain population group during one particular period of time. The “snapshot” can present demographic characteristics and current levels of involvement. It was chosen based on the need to answer the formulated research question concerning the impact of financial constraints on the participation process. Quantitative measures help detect correlations between different variables, including eligibility for the school meal program and weekly time spent on extracurricular activities (Fowler, 2013).

3.2 Sampling Procedure

The population for this study includes a convenience sampling of high school students. Potential participants were contacted through digital outreach methods (e.g., social media). Data collection took place during an eight-week period starting on January 21, 2026, and concluding on March 23, 2026. Students who chose to participate were provided informed consent prior to completing the survey.

The survey was administered online using Google Forms. This platform was selected due to its easy accessibility to the target population and to reduce potential threats to validity. Such an anonymous response can lower social desirability bias, which may emerge when minors self-report their behaviors.

3.3 Participants

Participants in the study included 74 high school students from the four public high schools in the Olentangy Local School District, including Olentangy High School, Olentangy Liberty High School, Olentangy Orange High School, and Olentangy Berlin High School. Of the 74 respondents, 70 (94.6%) were engaged in extracurricular activities while 4 (5.4%) had no such engagement.

Free/reduced-priced lunch program eligibility criteria were used to measure SES. In the dataset, 10 students (13.5%) fell into the low-SES category, 60 (81.1%) belonged to high-SES, while (5.4%) could not specify their SES status. Racial distribution consisted of 85.1% Asian students, 16.2% White students, 5.4% Black/African-American, 4.1% Hispanics/Latino, and 1.4% Middle Eastern / North African. Parental education was another demographic measure where 87.8% of the students reported at least one parent

or guardian attended college. Parental education is an important factor in this analysis since it controls for financial barriers and isolates cultural capital barriers in more varied SES samples. SES, determined by parental education and qualifications of free or reduced lunch, were central to the analysis as they reflect both financial resources and cultural capital. Additionally, demographic variables, such as race, were included to describe the sample and account for potential background differences in access.

3.4 Instrumentation

The survey included four distinct parts designed to measure various dimensions related to extracurricular access. First, demographic information such as race, parents' college education status, and eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch was collected in order to differentiate the results based on SES. Second, participation frequency and intensity was measured based on the number of activities and the weekly amount of time spent on them, which reflects the findings of Neely and Vaquera (2017) regarding the importance of participation intensity as a predictor of developmental outcomes compared to "yes-or-no" participation. Third, barriers were determined based on a list of factors that could hinder participation, including time, money, transportation issues, and lack of awareness. Such a format was vital since it would help rank barriers and address the engagement gap discussed in previous studies (Snellman et al., 2015). The final set of questions consisted of four Likert scale questions, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, measuring subjective feelings of financial impact and accessibility within the school. The questions were after direct questions asking if cost had been an issue that had directly hindered their ability to join, with clear delineations of what type of costs it could be, such as uniform fees, transportation, or equipment costs, in order to more effectively pinpoint what kind of financial stress may have been hindering participation.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two steps, through descriptive statistics and comparative analysis, which would allow researchers to compare participation rates and barriers between the two groups. This research design follows the quantitative paradigm precisely, as it allows for correlations to be made between economic status and participation results, providing the most accurate means of addressing the research question (Fowler, 2013). Through focusing on the perceptions and experiences of the students themselves as well as concrete participation data, this study avoids one of the largest weaknesses of using administrative records, which is that it cannot capture "internal" barriers such as fear of social stigma, low self-confidence, or simple ignorance of opportunities. By utilizing descriptive and comparative statistical techniques, the analysis aimed to transform raw survey responses into patterns, allowing for an assessment of whether SES acts as a statistically significant determinant of participation intensity and perceived barrier severity.

Data was analyzed using Python with the pandas, numpy, scipy, and matplotlib libraries. Only students who reported current participation in extracurricular activities and had clear SES classification (either qualifying or not qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch) were included in statistical comparisons, resulting in an analytical sample of 72 participants (10 low SES, 62 high SES). In order to test the

significance of differences between low and high SES individuals with regards to continuous data, independent sample t-tests were performed on variables like perception of financial impact, perceptions of school fees, probability of attendance if fees were waived, number of activities attended, and average weekly time spent attending activities. For these tests, the effect size was determined by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient (r), whereby r equal to 0.10 signifies a small effect size, r equal to 0.30 signifies a medium effect size, and r equal to 0.50 signifies a large effect size.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Results

The results are organized into four main sections: (1) perceptions of financial barriers, (2) participation intensity, (3) cost as a direct barrier to participation, and (4) reported barriers to participation. All analyses compare students from low SES (those qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and whose parent(s) did not attend college, $n = 10$) with students from high SES backgrounds (those not qualifying, $n = 62$).

4.2 Perception of Financial Barriers

The perceptions of students regarding how financial aspects influence their participation in extracurricular activities were estimated using three statements on a Likert scale. The average responses to these three statements can be seen in Fig. 1.

Financial Impact on Participation: Low SES students reported a higher mean rating ($M = 3.70$, $SD \approx 1.20$) compared to higher SES students ($M = 2.85$, $SD \approx 1.50$) when asked whether finances impact their ability to participate in extracurriculars. However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(70) \approx 1.56$, $p \approx 0.12$, $r \approx 0.18$, $n = 72$. The effect size was small, suggesting limited practical difference between groups on this measure.

Perception of School Costs: When asked whether extracurricular activities at their school are expensive, low SES students reported a higher mean rating ($M = 4.60$, $SD \approx 0.84$) than high SES students ($M = 3.65$, $SD \approx 1.35$). This difference approached statistical significance, $t(70) \approx 1.90$, $p \approx 0.06$, $r \approx 0.22$, $n = 72$, with a small-to-medium effect size. Although not reaching the conventional threshold for significance, the pattern suggests that low SES students may perceive school extracurriculars as more expensive than their high SES peers do.

Likelihood to Participate if Free: Students were asked whether they would be more likely to participate in extracurriculars if they were free. Low SES showed higher agreement ($M = 4.60$, $SD \approx 0.70$) compared to high SES students ($M = 4.05$, $SD \approx 1.15$). However, this difference was not statistically significant $t(70) \approx 1.30$, $p \approx 0.20$, $r \approx 0.15$, $n = 72$. The small effect size indicates that both groups expressed moderate-to-high interest in participating more if costs were eliminated, but low SES students showed slightly stronger endorsement.

Intense participation was measured through two variables; the number of extracurricular activities each student participated in and the mean hours spent each week by students for their extracurricular activities.

Number of Activities: There was no significant difference between the number of extracurricular activities done by low SES students and those done by high SES students, where low SES students participated in 4.80 extracurricular activities per semester on average ($SD \approx 3.20$), whereas high SES students did 4.75 activities ($SD \approx 1.95$). The result was $t(70) \approx -0.08$, $p \approx 0.94$, $r \approx 0.01$, $n = 72$. These results indicate that students' SES status had little role to play in predicting the number of extracurricular activities they did.

Hours Per Week: There was a significant difference in terms of how much time students were spending in their extracurricular activities. Low SES students participated in their activities for 3.90 hours per week on average ($SD \approx 1.90$), whereas high SES students did it for 7.40 hours per week ($SD \approx 3.50$). This is shown by the value of $t(70) \approx -2.90$, $p \approx 0.005$, $r \approx 0.33$, $n = 72$, where the effect size was medium. Refer to Fig. 3 below.

4.3 Direct Financial Obstacle to Joining an Extracurricular Activity

In a direct question asking about having ever opted not to join an extracurricular because of financial reasons, 50% (5 out of 10) of respondents from low SES families answered that cost was indeed such a reason, while 50% (5 out of 10) said otherwise. Meanwhile, among high SES respondents, 45% (28 out of 62) reported a negative effect of cost on participation, and 55% (34 out of 62) state it was not a problem. The analysis showed no significant relationship between the group and preventing cost factor $X^2(1, N = 72) \approx 0.00$, $p = 1.00$, Cramér's $V \approx 0.00$. See Fig. 4 below.

4.4 Cost as a Significant Barrier

The survey asked students which factors serve as barriers to their extracurricular involvement out of a possible list: time, cost, transportation, ignorance, anxiety/social phobia, family obligations, and lack of interest.

Low SES participants were more likely to point out the problem of cost: 60.0% (6 out of 10) mentioned cost as among their barriers. In contrast, only $\sim 40.3\%$ (25 out of 62) high SES participants pointed out the cost issue. Even though there seems to be a considerable difference between groups, it is not statistically significant: $X^2(1, N = 72) \approx 0.95$, $p \approx 0.33$, Cramér's $V \approx 0.11$. It seems to be associated with the limited number of participants in the first group ($N = 10$). However, in both cases, the most common barrier was related to time constraints because of school workload.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between SES and extracurricular participation among high school students, focusing on the financial barriers as well as student perceptions. The results indicate that while both low and high SES students take part in almost the same number of extracurricular activities, they differ significantly in the intensity of their involvement. Both groups of students perceived financial issues as a barrier, but low SES students were specifically concerned about it. Thus, the results indicate that inequality in extracurricular participation depends not so much on the level of participation itself as the intensity of participation as well as its sustainability and quality.

5.1 The Intensity Gap: Beyond Participation Rates

An interesting finding is connected with the time spent on extracurricular activities. According to the data obtained, both groups of students have almost the same number of extracurricular activities (4–5). At the same time, low SES students on average only engaged for 3.90 hours per week, while high SES students spent 7.40 hours per week on the same activities.

The stark contrast in this regard reveals that mere numbers cannot provide an adequate basis for the comparison of inequality in extracurricular participation. Taking participation as a binary variable or as a count variable might mask the existing differences in the level of participation.

The current research supports previous findings by Meier et al. (2018) that students from families with higher SES spend more time engaged in extracurricular activities and maintain their participation for a more extended period of time. The contribution of the current research consists in proving that there is a difference even though there appears to be a parity between the participation rates of lower-SES and higher-SES individuals. There are several reasons why this gap occurs. First, cost issues might serve as one of the barriers to intensive participation. Moreover, while low SES students might manage to enroll in these activities, extra costs can make it difficult for them to participate in such programs regularly or progress further within the activity group. Low SES individuals might have to take care of their family or find part-time jobs that might conflict with participation in extracurricular activities. This explanation seems valid because the survey inquired why individuals did not participate in extracurricular activities and competing responsibilities such as work or family obligations may contribute to reduced participation time. This highlights a limitation in how participation is traditionally measured, and why there is a difference in the intensity of participation between the two groups.

5.2 Perceived Cost: A Universal yet Inequitable Barrier

These results initially appear to contradict previous research (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010; Lareau (2002), which identifies financial cost as a primary barrier for lower SES students. However, the findings of this study suggest a more nuanced relationship between SES and financial barriers.

Although low SES participants showed somewhat higher mean ratings regarding the importance of finances ($M = 3.70$) compared to ($M = 2.85$) and school cost ($M = 4.60$ vs $M = 3.65$), the difference was not statistically significant. Moreover, the same was true when low SES students (50%) and high SES

students (45%) equally admitted that cost was a reason that deterred them from participation. Nevertheless, when it came to choosing barriers out of a provided list, the percentage of low SES students who chose cost (60.0% vs ~ 40.3%), was significantly higher. While there were no significant differences in the mean score between students with different SES, it is evident that cost served as a more persistent obstacle for low SES students. When combined, the results suggest that financial obstacles are not limited to only lower SES students; they appear to apply to all groups of students. However, the larger percentage of low SES students indicating that cost was a barrier to participation implies that, while their relationship was not statistically significant in this sample, financial obstacles may have more of an influence on the participation rates of lower SES students.

Additionally, simple yes-or-no measures of financial participation does not adequately assess the extent to which finances affect the depth of students' involvement. This study uniquely demonstrates that financial limitations affect not only participation but also the degree to which students engage.

5.3 The Importance of Non-Monetary Barriers

Although monetary problems played an important role in this research, other types of obstacles appeared to be equally important, if not even more significant. This implies that, despite making extracurricular activities completely free, there would still be disparities in their attendance. It should be noted that a student has to balance the needs of education, extracurricular activity, and personal life; besides, excessive academic pressure might discourage prolonged participation in extracurricular activities. Other barriers, such as difficulties related to transportation, lack of information regarding extracurricular activities, and feelings of anxiety, were also revealed by the study. It should be considered that these barriers tend to be interrelated and influence each other. For instance, a student who experiences anxiety around participation may also be less likely to seek out or engage with available opportunities.

Considering this, measures should be taken to minimize stigmatization and maximize accessibility among all students where feasible. Additionally, schools could take into account the hidden cost of participation in extracurricular activities, such as fees related to equipment usage, transportation costs, and expenses related to participating in competitions.

These conclusions have consequences for college admission offices that need to understand whether there might be some bias in favor of students who participate more actively in extracurricular life due to easier access to resources and opportunities. Ultimately, access should not be limited by cost and addressing these barriers plays a significant role in addressing inequities.

6. Limitations

There are various limitations to this study. The first being the number of participants among low SES students ($n = 10$) was quite low, thereby reducing its generalizability and making it difficult to establish significance. Future research requires employment of large samples from different institutions.

Additionally, an implication of this research is the use of self-reported data, which can be biased. There are many cases where respondents provide inaccurate responses, and respondents may have provided inaccurate information regarding their levels of participation and any barriers. Future research may consider using administrative data, such as those related to attendance logs or club memberships.

The cross-sectional nature of the research prevents the drawing of any causal inference. Although there exists a relationship between students' SES and level of participation intensity, it is impossible to conclude that financial difficulties result in reduced involvement. Future research can use longitudinal designs to continuously understand barriers. The study did not incorporate any qualitative measures. Research may be enhanced by examining various participation forms or considering other contextual factors affecting participation.

7. Implications

Despite those limitations, the results point towards a critical definition of what extracurricular equity truly means. Since there were no substantial differences in the participation rates and a significant difference in the amount of time spent on extracurricular activities (3.90 and 7.4) hours a week, respectively one can conclude that just having access to an activity does not suffice; the students participate in the same number of activities but have completely different experiences.

These disparities would go unnoticed if school districts only focus on participation rates. For instance, by accounting for participation intensity, the schools would be able to find out which students need their help and attention more than others. The results show that financial limitations, although statistically insignificant, still carry considerable weight. With almost half of the respondents from each group indicating that cost was a constraint, it appears that finances affect the participation decision process more significantly than anticipated. The increased percentage of low SES students citing cost as an issue is an indication of an uneven impact of cost that cannot be completely explained using statistical analysis. A more holistic solution might be needed to solve the problem identified above. Cost savings aside, other factors such as availability of free time, access to transportation, and flexible scheduling also contribute substantially. Failure to take these into consideration could mean failure to achieve the desired results.

8. Conclusion and Future Directions

Subsequent studies must take this research one step further by increasing sample sizes and broadening its scope. For instance, researchers can conduct their analysis using larger samples that are more evenly distributed across different SES levels, and include multiple school districts in their analysis. There is also a need to improve the methods used to measure student participation levels. The inclusion of other measures, such as years of participation or the degree of competitiveness, would enable researchers to understand the concept better. Additionally, it would be useful to broaden the measurement of barriers, since this study only examined students' experiences with participation constraints in binary terms.

Overall, this analysis emphasizes that the gap between students from different SES groups concerning extracurricular activities is not merely a question of accessibility but one of intensity. Even though students of all SES groups expressed the same levels of activity in extracurriculars, financial constraints are important, yet do not exhaust the list of other obstacles which limit the students' ability to be involved.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

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Figures

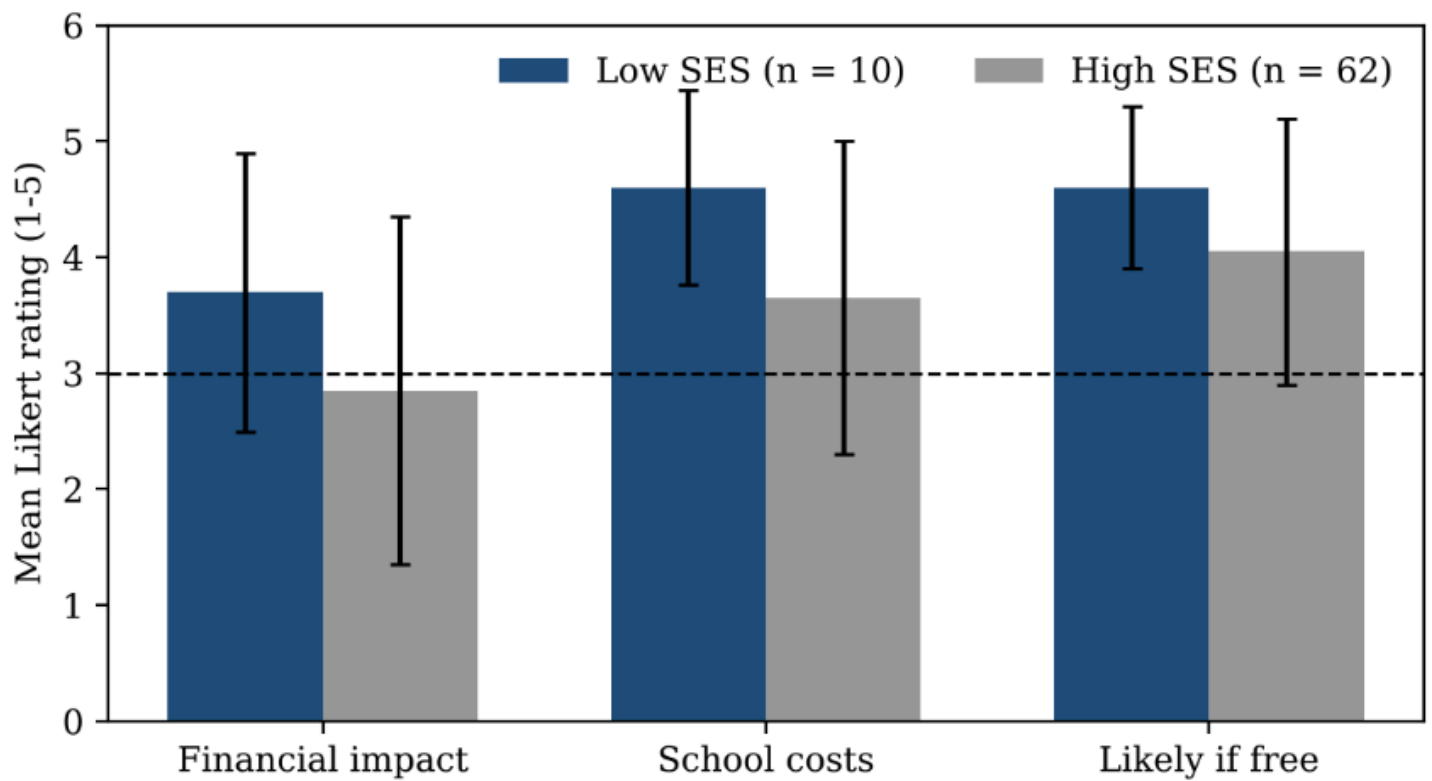


Figure 1

Financial perceptions by SES. Error bars represent standard deviation. The dashed line at 3 represents the midpoint of the 5-point Likert scale (neutral).

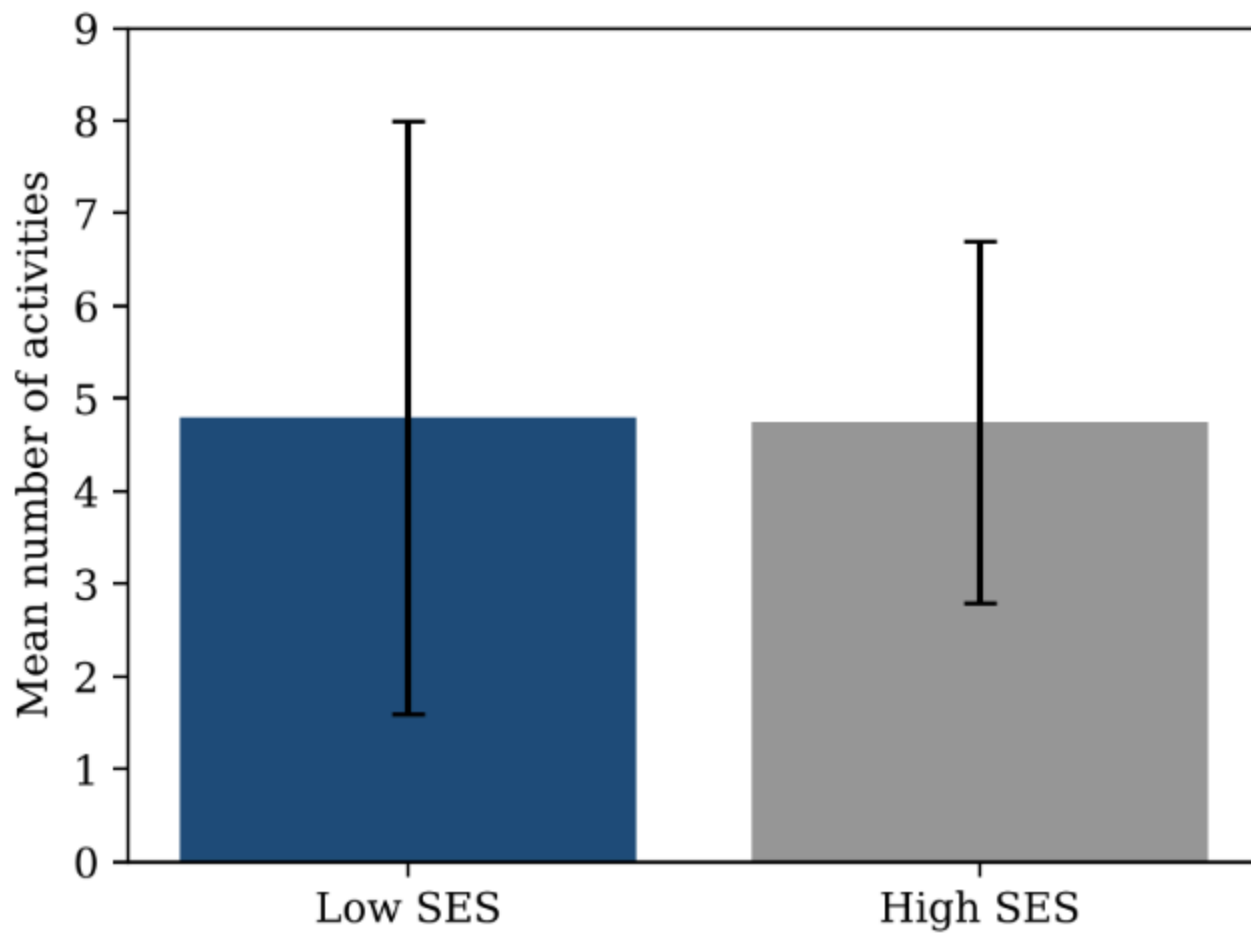


Figure 2

Average number of extracurricular activities by SES. No statistically significant differences were observed within groups.

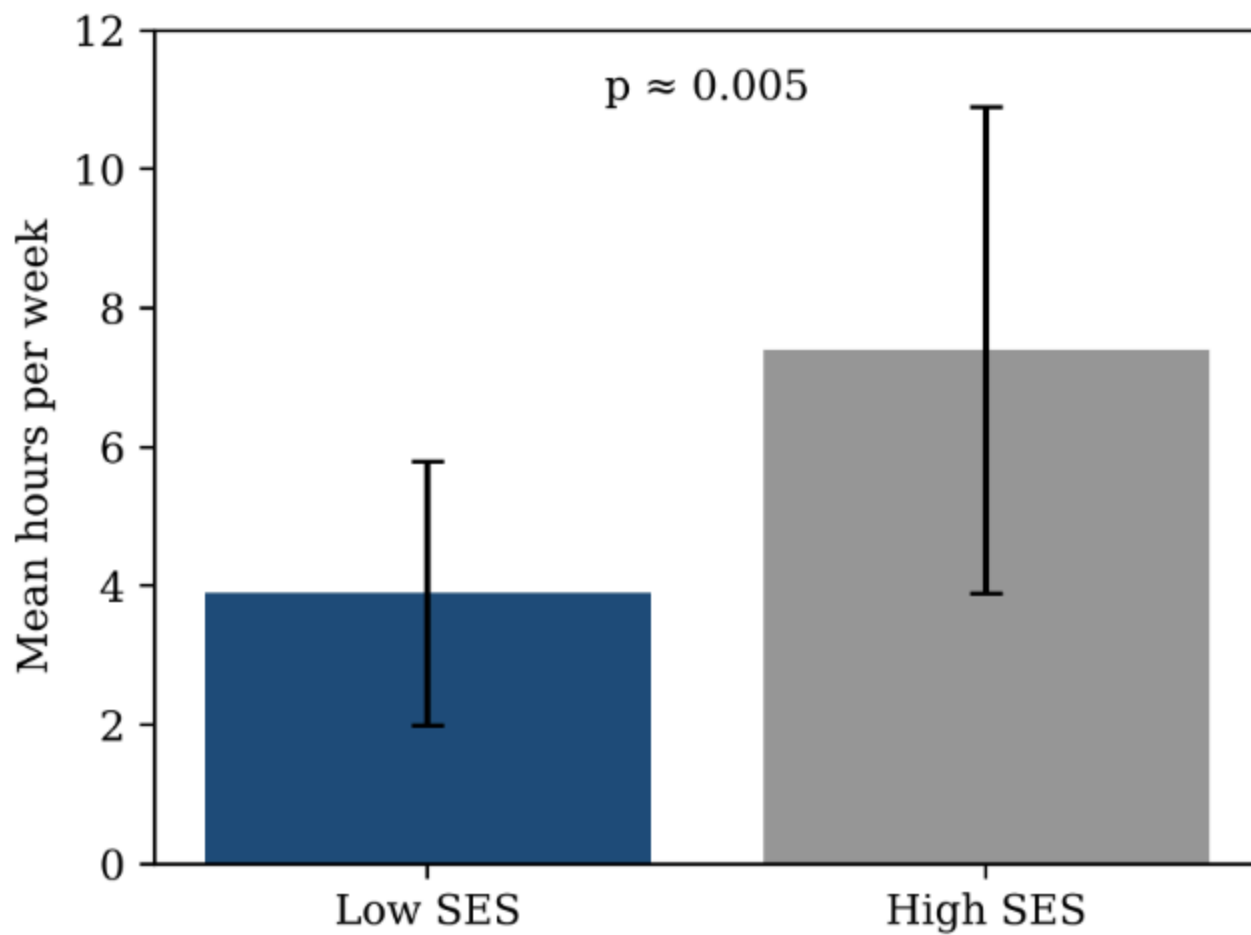


Figure 3

Weekly time spent on extracurricular activities according to SES level. Error bars show standard deviation. The difference between groups was found to be statistically significant ($p \approx 0.005$), with medium effect size ($r \approx 0.33$).

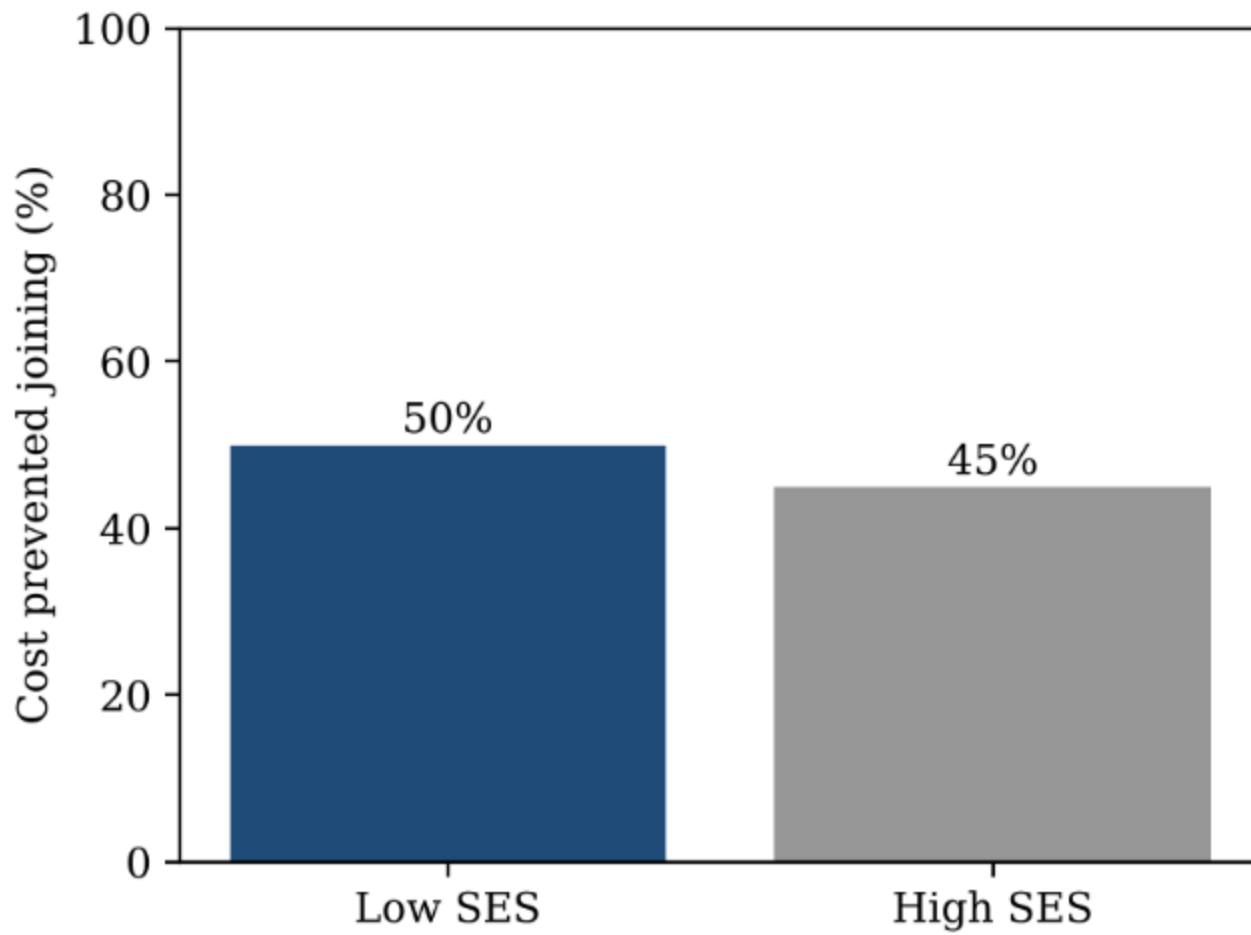


Figure 4

Percent of students reporting cost as a barrier to participation in extracurricular activities by SES status. No significant differences exist between groups ($p = 1.00$).

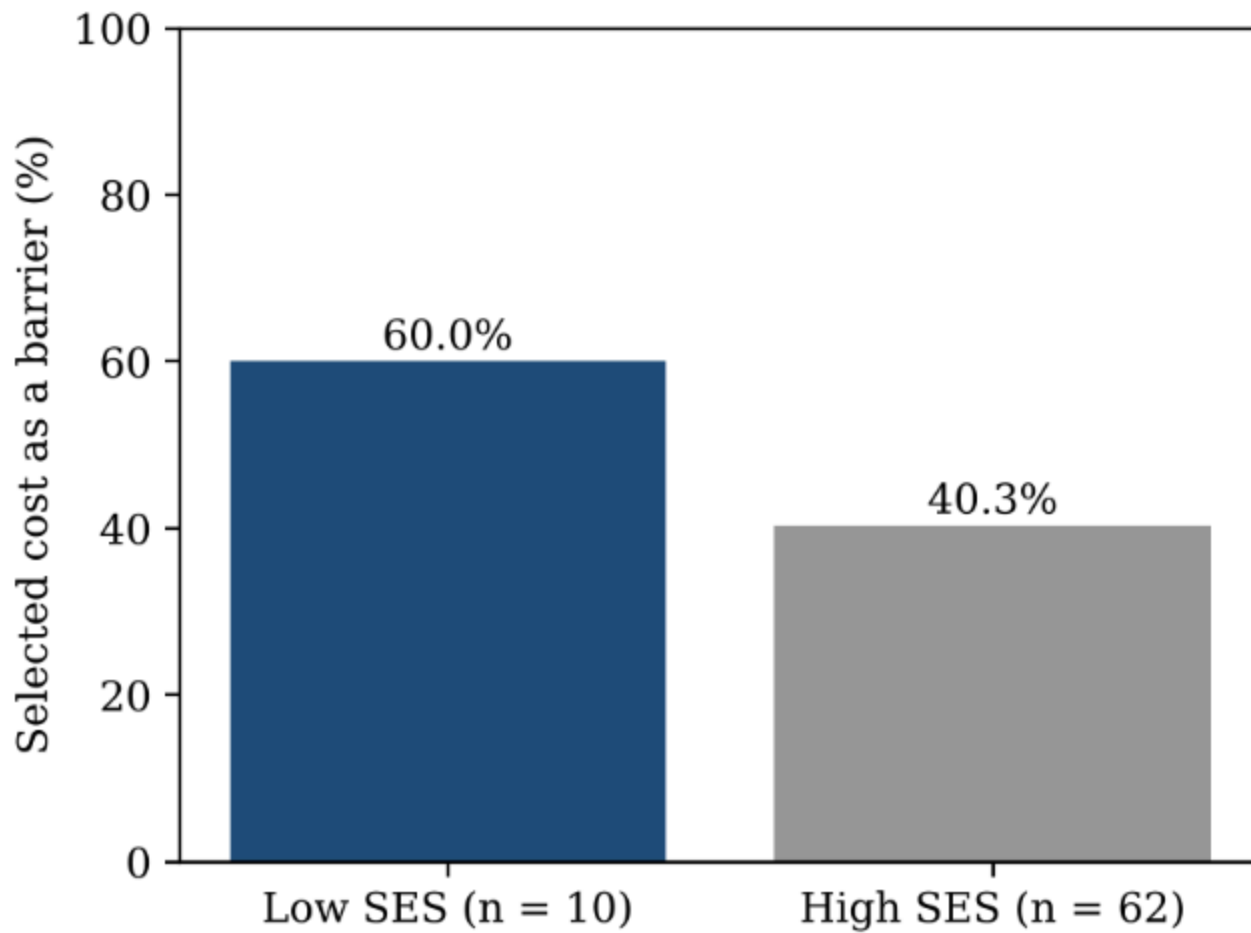


Figure 5

Percentage of students selecting cost as a barrier to extracurricular participation by SES.

Supplementary Files

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- [AppendixB.docx](#)