

The future value of interscholastic participation: An analysis of the impact of participation on future earnings and educational attainment

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the future value of interscholastic participation in extracurricular activities on the individual student level. In this study, two relationships were examined: (a) the relationship between high school student participation and postsecondary educational attainment, and (b) the relationship between high school student participation and future wage earnings. For decades, there has been an overwhelming sentiment that participation in athletics and other extracurricular activities is beneficial to the student. However, there is very little research that has been conducted on extracurricular activities, let alone the relationship between activities and future benefits.

Four different modes of analysis were used in this study: correlational analysis of participation in activities and future earnings; correlational analysis of participation in activities and educational attainment; a bivariate linear regression model accounting for participation, future earnings and educational attainment; and a multiple regression model accounting for participation, family demographics while in high school, future earnings and educational attainment. Data were extracted from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NCES, 2002) from the second (1990), third (1992) and fourth (2000) follow-ups. The NELS:88 database was selected for this study because its variables were consistent with the purposes of the study and because it contained longitudinal data on a large number of students who participated in athletics and activities in high school. NELS:88 contained data on a large number of students across a wide variance of populations, mixing both public and nonpublic schools along with students of a variety of demographic categories.

This study indicated that no practical relationship exists between participation in interscholastic activities and future educational attainment. Neither was a practical relationship found between participation in interscholastic activities and future wage earnings. In other words, the impact of participation in high school activities was negligible on future educational and wage attainment. Recommendations based on the findings of this study include the need for further research on the future and present value of interscholastic competition. In addition, school districts and school administrators must examine participation in their locale and determine the purpose of such activities in terms of if or how they meet the mission of their school systems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	VI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Description of the Design and Methodology	5
Organization of the Study.....	7
Conclusion.....	8
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	10
Historical Perspectives	10
Present Value.....	15
Theory of Human Capital.....	26
Future Value	34
Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	48
Research Questions and Hypotheses	49
Research Design	50
Methodology	57
Limitations of the Study	62
Summary	66

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS	67
Selection Criteria	67
Students in the Study	68
Participation Data	73
Findings from the Models of Association	79
Findings from the Bivariate Linear Regression Model	84
Findings from the Multiple Regression Model	110
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	118
Discussion of the Findings	118
Implications for Educational Practice	122
Conclusion	131
REFERENCES	133
APPENDIX A	141
Definitions of Terminology	141
APPENDIX B	144
Variables from NELS:88	144
Variables Created for this Study	145

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Student Demographic Information	69
Table 2: Student Socio-Economic Status	70
Table 3: Total Family Income	71
Table 4: Parent Educational Status	72
Table 5: Parent Marital Status	72
Table 6: Team Sports Participation Data.....	74
Table 7: Individual Sports Participation Data	75
Table 8: High School Sports Participation Data.....	76
Table 9: High School Cheer/Dance Participation Data	77
Table 10: High School Performing Arts Participation Data	78
Table 11: High School Activities Participation Data	79
Table 12: Correlation between Participation in High School Activities and Future Earnings	81
Table 13: Correlation between Participation in High School Activities and Educational Attainment	83
Table 14: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Grade 10 Activities on Future Earnings.....	86
Table 15: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Grade 12 on Future Earnings	87
Table 16: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Total Activities on Future Earnings	88
Table 17: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Future Earnings using Gender as a Control Variable.....	89
Table 18: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Future Earnings using Race as a Control Variable	90

Table 19: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Future Earnings using Socio-Economic Status as a Control Variable	92
Table 20: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Educational Attainment using Marital Status as a Control Variable	93
Table 21: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Future Earnings using Parent Education Level as a Control Variable	94
Table 22: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Athletic Participation on Future Earnings using Cheer / Dance and Performing Arts Participation as a Control Variable	96
Table 23: Educational Attainment	98
Table 24: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Grade 10 Activities on Educational Attainment	99
Table 25: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Grade 12 Activities on Educational Attainment	100
Table 26: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Total Activities on Educational Attainment	101
Table 27: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Educational Attainment using Gender as a Control Variable	102
Table 28: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Educational Attainment using Race as a Control Variable	103
Table 29: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Educational Attainment using Parent Socio-Economic Status as a Control Variable	105
Table 30: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Future Earnings using Parent Marital Status as a Control Variable	106
Table 31: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation on Educational Attainment using Parent Education Level as a Control Variable	107
Table 32: Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Total Athletic Participation on Educational Attainment using Cheer/Dance and Performing Arts Participation as a Control Variable	109
Table 33: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation and Parents' Educational Level on Future Earnings	112

Table 34: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation and Parents' Educational Level on Educational Attainment	113
Table 35: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation and Total Family Income on Future Earnings	114
Table 36: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation and Total Family Income on Educational Attainment.....	115
Table 37: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation, Parents' Educational Level, and Total Family Income on Future Earnings.....	116
Table 38: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the impact of Participation, Parents' Educational Level, and Total Family Income on Educational Attainment	117