Home Activities Encouraging Parent Involvement

Alexis M. Fields

Longwood University

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# Abstract

Parental involvement is important for children of all ages. Parental involvement initially builds a connection with children, enhances children's learning experience, educational abilities, and overall knowledge. However, often in the past and current year, parents have expressed the decrease in amount of time they spend with their children, which has thus created an issue for the need of parental involvement; as well as unique ways to improve parental involvement. This has led to the study of parental involvement amongst children of Head Start in the rural counties of southwest Virginia. Given the question, do in home activities (Fun Time Activities) improve/encourage parental involvement? Was studied by surveying 86 families of Head Start. The research conducted was done by using a mixed method analysis. The participants in this research was given a survey that listed qualitative and quantitative questions that were then further analyzed by themes and using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This paper will illustrate several qualitative themes and quantitative statistical findings from the data collected. Of those will include themes of teamwork/togetherness, family, time/preparations, and learning. Statistical findings will include that on average 16.5 of respondents with an educational attainment of some college or more are less likely to spend as much time with their child/children compared to those who have a high school degree or less. Further research may be needed as the level of education received corresponds to the amount of parental involvement.

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*Keywords:* Head Start, Fun Time Activities, parental involvement, child/children

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# Home Activities Encouraging Parent Involvement

Parental involvement has been studied throughout the years by researchers as it leads to children's success in academics. It has been shown that early stages of parental involvement improve children's development of learning and obtaining information as well as improving a connection with the parent. In broader terms, parent involvement is defined by Brito and Waller (1994) as a concept that can include many different activities; It can range from an impersonal visit to school once a year to frequent parent-teacher consultations to active school governorship. The lack of parental involvement has thus been an ongoing issue which has created several researchers to conducts studies on the use of parental involvement.

Several studies have illustrated that parental involvement does not only consist inside of the home however, parental involvement may consist with communication with the child’s/children’s parents. ‘Parents crave communication-real communication that specifically describes how their child is doing, helps to give them ways to improve their child’s performance’ (McEwan, 2005). This is a different study compared to others listed below in the literature review section of the paper, as it signifies the importance of communication with teachers to better enhances educational attainments for the child/children. Active parent’s involvement improves student’s academic success (Dodd and Konzel, 2002). This signifies the importance of parental involvement as ‘parent involvement in education has changed over time from parents as primary educators, to parents as responsible for choosing adults to educate their children’ (Tutwiler, 2005). The significance of the study is to improve and encourage parental involvement to enhance early stages of educational attainment, a form of connection with the child/children, and the ability to overall further broaden children's knowledge.

# Literature Review

# Parent involvement is a useful way in building a connection within the child and the parent. Parent involvement is also a useful way for improving children's enhancements, knowledge, and abilities in education. Parent involvement may be done by using in home activities as well as outside activities in ways of providing a better connection/involvement with the child. Of such involvement may include, participation with homework, school activities (school plays, sports, and other performances), and communication. In broader terms, parent involvement is defined by Brito and Waller (1994) as a concept that can include many different activities; It can range from an impersonal visit to school once a year to frequent parent-teacher consultations to active school governorship.

In the current study of research, parent involvement is being studied through the Head Start Program. The Head Start Program consist of children ages three to five and is a way of allowing children to receive the educational needs and requirements upon participation of a public school. The Head Start Program (H.S. Program) is the nation’s largest early intervention and prevention program for at-risk low-income preschoolers in the United States (Bratton, Ceballos, Sheely-Moore, Meany-Walen, Pronchenk, & Jones, 2012). Within this study, the use of parent involvement will be studied by analyzing specific activities done by parents and their children (together) while comparing the race and ethnicity upon each specific individual family.

## Head Start

The Head Start Project was designed to interrupt the cycle of poverty. More than 32 million Americans, 15 percent of the population, fell below the official poverty level for a family of four according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The Head Start Program was envisioned as a comprehensive program including intellectual, health, nutritional, social development, and parental involvement components. (Oyeade, Washington, & Gullo, 1989). Head start has been referred to as the nation’s premier federally sponsored early childhood education program. (Barnett, 1995; Lombardi, Harding, Connors, and Friedman-Krauss, 2016). The Head Start Program has provided comprehensive services to low-income preschool children and their families across the United States in an attempt to “narrow the gap” between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers. Head Start is a pioneer as one of the largest, most comprehensive programs for children three to four years old and is a signature of the mid-1960s “War on Poverty” (Morris, Connors, Friedman-Krauss, Mcoy, Weiland, Feller, Page, Bloom & Yoshikawa, 2018). The Head Start Impact study (HSIS) was created and designed in response to a 1998 congressional mandate to provide a national estimate of Head Start’s average impact on child outcomes and to explore for whom and under what circumstances its impacts are the greatest (HSIS; Puma, Bell, Cook, Heid, & Lopez, 2005; Puma et al., 2010a; Puma et al., 2012). Information to this day is still being conducted and configured in the effects of the Head Start Program and parental involvement.

**Early Childcare**

Throughout childcare, children go through several or more stages of development. Of these developments, allow for children to improve and enhance their mobility and knowledge. In order to measure children's improvements and enhancements, the General Outcome Measurement (GOM) was developed. The purpose of the (GOM) was formed to provide information of preschoolers “progress over-time and determine whether or not intervention is needed within the classroom (Greenwood et al., 2011). Referring upon children's developmental stages, the Institute for Measuring Growth and Development is appropriate for young children within three developmental stages: (1) Infant/toddlers (6 to 36 months), (2) Part C, Early Head Start (EHS) and Part B-Pre-K and Head Start Program, and (3) early elementary students (Grades K-3) (Hines, Volume 18). The earlier parents are involved with their children, increases children's knowledge of certain aspects and will increase their physical connection with their parents. Exemplifying the importance of the research conducted on parental involvement in children as young as three years old and older.

**Parental Involvement and Parent Teacher Communication**

Parental involvement also consists of being involved with the child's teacher and studies have also shown that by having parents communicate with their child's teachers, allowed for the child to build a sense of connection with their parent. This also allowed for parents to gather information on their child's academic achievements and struggles. Which then lead for the parents to become more active in spending time with their children in terms of participating in school activities. Such as participating in the child's needs and help for homework, studying for spelling test, and practicing for school plays or other important school related activities.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to form a connection and a use of communication. Miss communication between students and teacher or teacher and parent can cause for performances to flounder as the they [the child/children] may feel bad (Dodd and Konzal, 2002). ‘Parents crave communication-real communication that specifically describes how their child is doing, helps to give them ways to improve their child's performance (McEwan, 2005). By having parents communicate with their child's teacher, allows for them to be aware of the child's academic needs and allows for the teacher to plan accordingly.

There are significant ways in which parents may become involved with their children's academic needs such as meet the teacher night, attending field trips, parent organizations, and emailing their teachers. Active parent’s involvement improves student’s academic success (Dodd and Konzel, 2002). By having this changed relationship in parents and teachers, increases children's awareness of the connection they have with their parents and gives them the courage to continue to learn. ‘Parent involvement in education has changed over time from parents as primary educators, to parents as responsible for choosing adults to educate their children’ (Tutwiler, 2005).

**Race and Ethnic Groups**

Race, ethnicity, and language may play a key factor in the use of parent involvement and the Head Start Programs. Levels of parent’s involvement also vary among racial and ethnic groups (Yan and Lin, 2005). Language conflicts for ethnic groups tends to be a barrier (Dodd and Konzal, 2002) (Ogbu, 1999). Upon the different races and ethnic groups, African American and Latino families demonstrated low rates of parental involvement (Simoni and Adelman, 1990). The research conducted has demonstrated differences in parental involvement among African American, Latino, and white families. Through the study conducted, researchers found that African American families tend to spend more time in home-based activities with their children than their white counterparts (Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, and Hill, 2005).

**Epstein Model and Benefits**

The Epstein Model is a great way of allowing parents to become better involved with their children's academic needs. The Epstein Model has six types of family involvement behaviors of those include positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships (Epstein and Dauber, 1991). This allows for better communication with their children, the given and necessary needs for their children's improvements of education. The Epstein Model is not only great for parent’s involvement, but it is also great for teacher’s involvement with their students and their students’ parents. Allowing for better communication to be received through the parents and student, in ways of planning activities in or outside the school. The Epstein Model demonstrates the improvements of parent involvement by including activities in the school and at home. This is explained and done by having parents volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, assisting with homework, and attending school events. A lack of parent involvement results in low performances of schools (Bower and Griffin, 2011). As for benefits for the Epstein Model, parental involvement, and activities have some benefits. Benefits were manifested in better parenting skills, namely, better communication with their children and greater sensitivity and emotional responsiveness; parents also used more encouragement with their children and provided more positive interaction (Oyemade, Washington, and Gullo, 1989). Parental involvement and activities are important in the enhancement and encouragement of childhood development and physical connection.

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# Data and Methods

## Study design and sample

The population consisted of families with children enrolled in Head Start, ages 3-5 years old. The sample size consisted of 86 enrolled families of Head Start (located in 3 rural counties in southwest Virginia). The research studied was conducted by giving the participants activities (the Thankful Turkey, Animal Dice, Noodle Necklace, Stress Ball Balloon, and Sugar Writing) to enhance parent involvement upon children. This was done by using a mixed-methods design. Quantitative research and qualitative research were gathered throughout the research and the overall response rate was 44 out of the 86 families; giving a 51 percent rate.

## Procedure

The surveys that were given to the participants were administered by the Longwood University Department of Sociology. Which followed the procedures of research methods (the use of surveys to collect informational data upon the studied research). Each survey that was given to the participants had a consent form labeled at the top of the survey. The consent form stated, *please answer the following questions based on your household’s experience with the Family Fun Time Activities. Your answers will be anonymous. Please answer questions as accurately as possible and feel free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. If for any reason you feel the need to end your participation in this survey, you are free to do so. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Dr. JoEllen Pederson at pedersonjg@longwood.edu or 434-395-2700.* Which was then followed by the question of *do you agree to these directions?* By answering as yes or no. The supplies given to the participants were given to three to five-year old’s of Head Start through their teachers. The supplies consisted of a hard-copy survey, which had an attached five-dollar Walmart gift card. The supplies and the survey were then collected by the teachers in a time frame of two weeks. The researchers had no contact with the participants throughout the experiment.

**Quantitative measures/close-ended questions**

The quantitative measures/close-ended questions were collected by using a 0-10 scale. The quantitative questions given on the survey were, *on a scale from 0-10, how much did your family enjoy this activity (0=Not at all, 10=Very much). On a scale from 0-10, how much did this activity help to improve you and your child’s/children’s relationship? (0=Not at all, 10=Very much).* Within the survey given to the participants the dependent question was how much they completed and the amount of parent involvement distributed. For example, how involved was your family in this activity? (0=Not at all, 10=Very much). The independent question was the educational achievements received. For example, *how many colors did your child/children identify?* Note, in the Table 1 and Table 2 *frequency* has been changed to *count.* In Table 3 note, the scale of *0-10* has been condensed to *0-5* and *6 or more.* Note, the matrix question is *During a typical day, how many hours do you get to spend interacting with your child/children?* In Table 3 note, *during a typical day, how many hours do you get to spend interacting with your child/children?* Has been changed to *hours of interactions.*

**Qualitative measures/open-ended questions**

The qualitative measures/open-ended questions were collected by asking specific open-ended questions, which required our participants to give descriptive detailed information. For example, *what was your favorite activity and why? Please explain what your family gained from these activities. How will you use what you gained in the future? Do you think that being provided with pre-planned activities increased the amount of fun time you got to spend with your family after school? Please explain. If you had to change at least one thing about these activities for future use, what would it be?* The following questions are located on the survey given to the participants.

**Analysis**

***Quantitative responses****.* Quantitative responses used descriptive analysis, which was conducted by using SPSS 25. SPSS 25 is Statistical Package for Social Sciences 25.

***Qualitative responses.*** Qualitative responses were collected by using qualitative coding based on themes. This process was done by taking all of the responses and putting them into a word document; In order to compare and contrast the responses and to transcribe the responses.

***Mixed-method analysis.*** “Mixed-method analysis where quantitative and qualitative data confirmed, contrasted, or enhanced one another is presented at the end of the results section” (Grossman and Porche, 2013).

**Quantitative Findings**

The Longwood Department of Sociology analyzed the closed-ended (quantitative research) by using SPSS (Statistical Analysis Software). The independent variable is the parent’s educational attainment and the dependent variable is the amount of parental involvement with the child/children. The way parental involvement was measured was by collected data on the amount of time parents spend with their child/children per day (hours of interactions). The matrix question *During a typical day, how many hours do you get to spend interacting with your child/children?* allowed for the respondents to give qualitative feedback in which the Longwood Department of Sociology correlated to the second matrix question. The mean was 5.7, the median was 5.8 and the mode was 6.0. The second matrix question *What is the highest level of education anyone in your household has completed?* Below, Table 1 shows the highest level of educational attainment received with the average percent of respondents who have attained the level of education.

Table 1

*Highest Level of Education in the Household*

Level of Education Count %

Less than High School 1 2.6%

Some High School 2 5.3%

High School degree 8 21.1%

Some college 17 44.7%

College Degree 8 21.1%

Master`s Degree or more 1 2.6%

Prefer not to answer 1 2.6%

Total 38 100%

In Table 2, when asking the dependent question *During a typical day, how many hours do you get to spend interacting with your child/children?* Respondents answered in majority, of spending 6 or more hours interacting with their child/children. Continuing, 15.8 percent of respondents answered in spending four hours with their child/children. With a 15. 8 percent, respondents also answered in spending five hours with their child/children. Furthermore, 21.0 percent of respondents answered in spending 6 hours with their child/children. In average, parents spend 5.6 hours with their children during a typical day.

Table 2

*Amount of Hours Parents Spend with their Child/children*

Hours spent with child/children Count %

1 1 2.6%

2 2 5.3%

3 3 7.9%

4 6 15.8%

5 6 15.8%

6 8 21.0%

7 4 10.5%

8 2 5.3%

9 1 2.6%

10 or more 5 13.2%

Total 38 100%

*Note:* The percentages were rounded to the nearest tenth.

Table 3 shows the effects of educational attainment in comparison to parental interactions. Within the hours of interactions, respondents with an educational attainment of a GED (General Education Development) or less answered in having a 27.3 percent and 43.8 percent for some college or more. Continuing, respondents who answered in having six or more hours of interactions had a 72.7 percent of an educational attainment (GED or less) and 56.2 percent of some college or more. In average, 16.5 percent of respondents who have some college or more, are less likely to spend as much time with their child/children compared to the respondents who have a high school degree or less.

Table 3

*The Effects of Educational Attainment on Parent Child Interactions*

Education

Hours of Interactions GED or Less Some College or More

0-5 27.3% 43.8%

6 or more 72.7% 56.2%

Total 100% 100%

*Note:* Respondents who have some college education or more are on average 16.5% less likely to spend as much time with their child/children than respondents who have a high school degree or less.

Overall, the findings conclude that respondents who have a higher level of education (refer to Table 1 and Table 2) spend less time with their child/children. On average, 16.5 percent of respondents with an educational attainment of some college or more, are less likely to spend as much time with their child/children compared to those with a high school degree or less. Meaning, the higher the educational attainment achieved for the respondents correlates to the low percentage rates of parental involvement. For example, respondents who have an educational attainment of a GED or less had a 72.7 percent of spending six or more hours with their child/children. Respondents who have an educational attainment of some college or more answered in had a 56.2 percent of spending six or more hours with their child/children. Therefore, respondents who had a lower attainment of education spent more time with their child/children compared to the respondents who had a higher attainment of education.

# Qualitative Findings

Out of the 86 surveys, the Longwood Department of Sociology received a sample of 19 surveys (first wave of surveys). Each survey had a total of four open-ended questions (qualitative questions), which allowed for the participants to elaborate on their experience of the activities (the activities included the, Thankful Turkey Activity, Animal Dice Activity, Noodle Necklace Activity, Stress Ball Balloon Activity, and Sugar Writing Activity). The Longwood Department of Sociology examined the open-ended question (qualitative data) by using open and axial coding. Examining the open-ended (qualitative questions) there were several findings that reoccurred throughout the survey as well as recurring favorite activities completed.

Of the reoccurring findings examined throughout the survey, included teamwork/togetherness, family, time/preparations, and learning. These themes illustrated the importance of parent involvement and education for the parent and child. Out of the favorite activities, the Stress Ball Balloon activity and the Animal Dice activity was the favorite from the participants. For example, Respondent 1 stated, “Animal dice activity & stress Ball Balloon Activity. Cause He likes making animal noise. Ball Ballon Cause He likes making express”. Respondent 12 stated, “We loved the “Animal Dice Activity” most because not only was it hands on, it was very informative and super interactive”. These activities demonstrated the use of parental involvement while providing the child with education and allowing the child to be able to express themselves.

Out of the 19 respondents, Respondents 1, 7, 13, and 15 stated the use of teamwork and working together as a family. For example, Respondent 1 stated, “We learn to do teamwork”. Respondent 7 stated, “We were together doing these activities: my brother, me, and my son”. Respondent 13 stated, “We dont usually do these kinds of things together”. Respondent 15 stated, “We all gained experience in following directions and working together”. Each respondent (Respondent 1, 7, 13, and 15) exonerates the importance of teamwork and working together with their children. As it allowed for them to bond with their children and allowed for their children to gain knowledge from the activities. The respondent’s responses signify the importance of early on parent involvement as it enhances children's knowledge and a formation of parents connecting with their child.

Continuing, the theme of family was examined as it was a recurring statement in several of the respondent’s surveys. For example, Respondents 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 15, and 17 each mentioned how the family worked on these activities as a whole. Respondent 2 stated, “Box game fun for whole family”. Respondent 5 stated, “Our family was able to bond”. Respondent 8 stated, “It had us spend more time together by looking up more things to do ase family”. Respondent 10 stated, “The animal dice game it got the family physically active”. Respondent 12 stated, “We always insure theres time to spend with family after school”. Respondent 15 stated, “It provided us with family time”. Respondent 17 stated, “Working together, have family time”. All of which signifies the importance of family activities as it encourages parental involvement. Forming a relationship with parents and their children while education is being received to the children.

Time/preparation was a reoccurring theme as several of the respondents illustrated the amount of time they got to spend with their child and the family as a whole. Also, several of the respondents mentioned that the amount of time in preparations were beneficial as comparing to the survey, many of the respondents work 30 plus hours a week. Meaning, time in preparations for activities is limited. For example, Respondents 4 stated, “Yes it look less to prepare the activity”. Respondent 12 stated, “‘Mommy and Me’ time with education and creative projects. My daughter had a time of laughs and learning”. Respondents 17 stated, “Yes, because spending time is very important”. Respondent 19 stated, “My family gained quality time and it helped my child understand things about his feelings & what to be thankful for”. All of the respondent’s statements exemplifies the affects of time and preparations for parent involvement.

Lastly, after examining each of the surveys, a theme of learning recurred several times from the respondents. For example, Respondent 11 stated, “Fun learning activities that we can keep playing in the future”. Respondent 6 stated, “I like each activity, I would like more activities about learning to write and how to hold an pencil correctly”. This exemplifies the importance of parental involvement, the educational benefits for the child using activities that anticipates parental involvement and having family quality time.

Overall, parental involvement in the use of activities enhances the child’s/children’s knowledge and forms a connection with the parent. This is done by promoting teamwork/togetherness as a family. Furthermore, the importance of parental involvement enhances early on childhood development by having less time in preparations for activities and more time with the child as a family. This also allows for the child and the parent to bond, but it also allows for the child to be able to express their emotions. Meaning, parental involvement is essentially important for the child as it promotes an early onset of education and the formation of a closer relationship with the parent.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, parental involvement enhances child/children's educational attainment. Parental involvement also creates a formation of connectedness with the child/children. The major findings conducted throughout the research shows that the higher the education attainment by the parents, correlates to a decreasing amount of time spent with the child/children. On average, 16.5 percent of parents who obtained some college or higher were less likely to spend time as much time with their child/children; compared to those with a lesser educational attainment. Furthermore, the reoccurring theme of time persisted throughout the data collected. Exemplifying the need for more time spent with the child/children and less time in brainstorming activities to do with the child/children. In order to encourage parental involvement in the use of activities such as those given to the parents and children of Head Start, the amount of time in preparing the activity cannot exceed a great length of time. The limitations and implication prevented researchers from gathering further data to correlate the amount of time higher educational attainment participants spent working in and outside of the home compared to those with a lower educational attainment. Also, limitations prevented researchers from collecting data on parental involvement and the connection with the child/children before handing out the activities to the participants. Personally, I would like to further conduct research in the amount of time the participants spend doing work outside/inside the home and correlate the findings to the amount of parental involvement. As well as the connections formed with the child/children. Overall, the use of parental involvement (in the use of activities) enhances educational attainment for the child/children and creates a connection with the child/children.

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