Parent Involvement among Head Start Families

April Escobar

Longwood University

**Abstract**

Students at Longwood University worked with Head Start and sent out suggested activities for parents to do with their kids and also included surveys to identify characteristics of the parents, including amount of education. The purpose of this study was to provide parents with activities to do with their children which would help them moving forward. The activities helped children learn new skills and also helped the families work together. The activities were planned for the parents and children, which maximized the time the parents could spend actually doing the activities with their children.

Students collected 44 surveys from parents and students analyzed them. This study was a mixed methods study, which analyzed open and close ended questions. The study concluded that parents with at least a GED, they are more likely to partake in activities with their children. Parents with higher education than some college or hardly any education has been seen to be less active with their children.

**Introduction**

Parent involvement involves being engaged to activities that can be learned within their household and schools. Parental involvement is highly encouraged for the positive educational outcomes. Even though it’s highly encouraged, there are many factors that stop parents from being involved. The education that parents have received can cause an affect within parental involvement. The big question is, do parent’s highest level of education affect parental involvement? In the following literature review by Tarullo & O’Brien (2002), one of their main findings were involved with parent’s level of education. Their research shows that this can be a common factor with involvement. They have made this research with the intentions of increasing active parental involvement by showing awareness to others with this research. (Tarullo & O’Brien, 2002)

In the current study Longwood students have done, we have researched parental involvement and what exactly impacts their involvement with their children. Researchers have found results similar to the literature review founded by Tarullo & O’Brien (2002).

**Literature Review**

Parental involvement during children’s academic hours and after hours can impact their skills of interpreting mathematics, social skills and attitudes toward school. Parent involvement is the amount of participation as a parent when it comes to any extra after school activities and/or schooling of their child’s life. There are many ways activities to be able to participate in these involvements from volunteering to activities that can be created with the children (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013). There are also many impacts that have been found when it comes to parent involvement. As important as parent involvement is, is there a barrier in between the children, their school, because of education?

**Parent Involvement**

In the studies that researchers have conducted, results show that there is higher student achievement when parents are involved in their children’s lives. Stacer & Perrucci (2013) have found that parents start getting involved in children’s education when their child is starting to get low grades. Also, the parents get involved when they decide to home-school their child. Adults with less education typically did not get involved as those with higher education. Parents who have received higher education can perhaps help their children with their schoolwork better than those without higher education (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013).

The purpose of these findings is to investigate if education impacts their participation. Tarullo & O’Brien (2002) have researched parent’s education. They have found that three quarters of all parents had at least a high school diploma or GED. Seeing parents with at least a GED is commonly seen throughout researches. Parents with college or higher education has been seen to be less active with their children, due to possibly working many hours or further more education they have been getting. (Tarullo & O’Brien, 2002)

**Methodology**

For this study to measure if education is an impact. Tarullo & O’Brien (2002) examined household families with educational differences. Participants in this study were parents that were interviewed along with the children in their households. These researchers investigated programs like Head Start and sorted them into different regions. They studied if locations is also a factor to parent’s education and parental involvement. For their study, 3,648 families were engaged with an 87.1% response rate. During this study, researchers have found that 72% had at least a high school diploma. As for 32.2% have had some college education. (Tarullo & O’Brien, 2002)

Parents that are less educated have been found to be more involved with their children. The two studies are similar due to the fact that both researchers have found that education is a common factor of parental involvement with their children.

**Data and Methods**

**Study Design**

This study worked with the Head Start program that also worked with parents with children in the program that chose to be involved in this study. In this study students researched better ways for parents to be more involved in the lives of their children. Head Start Programs is a program that helps young children who come from low- income families. Their main priority is to help children’s growth and development of learning and the environment they are learning in. They also offer home-based services for children. (Head Start Programs, 2019) In this study, researchers focused on home activities and if activities increase parent involvement.

**Procedure**

Researchers focused on doing a research evaluation with mixed methods. The research worked with 86 parents that was in Head Start that are within three rural counties. These families also come from a low-income circumstances. The research was focused on parent involvement and suggested five different activities for them to do together. With these activities, there will be many skills that will be gained from both parents and children. A class of college students created the activities that we will be analyzing. For us to analyze the results of parent involvement, we sent out a survey questionnaire to the teachers in this program for them to give to the parents. In these surveys, before parents and children were able to do these activities, parents were asked to agree to participate. With these surveys, surveys were handed out to the families with gift cards for choosing to take the time to participate in this research. Surveys were later collected by the teachers. Each survey had both open and closed ended questions for the parents to answer after the activities.

For quantitative measures we asked questions such as: *What is the highest level of education anyone in your household has completed?* *How long did it take you and your child/children to complete the activity? From the following choices, please choose the most appropriate level of completion for this activity. On a scale from 0-10, how well did your family enjoy this activity?* These questions were off of a scale that ranked from 0 to 10. The data we gathered was based on improvement of the children while focusing on parental involvement.

For the qualitative measures, in the survey we asked four open ended questions. Such as: *The Family Fun Time Activities included a Thankful Turkey Activity, an Animal Dice Activity, a Noodle Necklace Activity, a Stress Ball Balloon Activity, and a Sugar Tray Writing Activity. 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?* These questions help Head Start and our research to obtain further information about which one they liked the best and if these activities helped with higher parental involvement. This also gives us more information about their opinions on the activities.

**Analysis**

After we received the surveys, 44 survey responses came back which the students analyzed. The data for the quantitative responses was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database. The qualitative data was coded to examine themes. While for the quantitative data, to analysis the findings, students have re-coded the data.

**Quantitative Findings**

In the survey, students have measured the independent and dependent variables using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The independent variable showed the amount of education that parents have received. The dependent variable measures the amount hours that parents spend with their child/children during a typical day. With these findings, the mean was 5.7, with a 5.8 median, and a 6.0 mode.

Table 1 describes the highest level of education in the children’s household. Parents were asked to answer the question: *What is the highest level of education anyone in your household has completed?* The table below shows that 44.7% of parents that participated in this survey has received some college as their highest education while having their high school degree and college degree was tied as second at 21.1%.

 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%

Table 2 represents the amount of hours that parents spend with their child/children. Parents were asked to answer the question: *During a typical, how many hours do you get to spend interacting with your child/children.* This was on a scale from one through ten. In the table, answers with decimal points were rounded up. 21.0% percent of parents answered with six hours spent with their child and 15.8% of parents answered with four or five hours.

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.

The last table compared both independent and dependent variables. Table 3 represents a comparison of both. The table below shows that having education in the household does have an effect on parent involvement. Comparing both independent and dependent, the table shows that parents with a GED or less a 72.7% shows 6 or more hours spent with their child/children. The table shows 56.2% with parents with some college or more also shows more time spent with their child/children.

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%

**Qualitative Findings**

On the first round of data, the amount of surveys collected were 19 surveys out of 86. After analyzing the surveys, there are three themes that can be seen throughout the different respondents. Respondents have gained the time spent together as a family, they have gained the skill on working together, and with these activities parents/guardians are able to do these activities without taking the time to prepare them.

The biggest theme was what they have gained from participating in these activities. They gained a lot of time spending time together as a family. Respondent 5, 12, and 13 had a similar theme of having time together that created a bond within the family. These activities brought families together that usually don’t have the time and that are not used to doing things together. Respondent 13 said *“We were together doing these activies: my brother, me, and, my son. We don’t usually do these kinds of things together. I want to continue doing things together. My son was happy and it was fun.”* As respondent 5 had a similar theme of being together saying *“Our Family was able to bond. We learned that we can learn and have fun at the same time”.* Respondent 12 talks about having *“mommy and me time”.* While analyzing these surveys this was a common theme that our research was focusing on, was parental involvement.

Another theme was learning to work together as a family both the respondents and their children have gained this skill while doing these activities. Throughout the surveys, the word “together” was a common word that kept getting used when talking about what they have gained. Respondents were asked to answer the question *“Please explain what your family gained from these activities. How will you use what you gained in the future?”* Respondent 16 replied saying *“We gained that we can work together and have fun”*. Respondent 15 said *“We all gained experience in following directions and working together.”* Working together as a family takes time and patience. That is what respondent 18 answers, *“Working well together just takes a little patience.”* These activities helped parents/guardians understand that working together is a skill that can be improved.

With having these activities, this helped families have activities to do that was prepared. This gave more time and fun with their children rather than prepare after school activities. These were activities that were pre-planned and this helped family’s do the activities right away instead of taking the time to think and prepare an activity. Respondents were asked to answer if pre-planned activities increased the amount of fun time families got to spend after school. Respondent 7 thought these activities were very helpful. They responded with *“Yes, it was very helpful. Everything was already there so all we needed to do was enjoy the activity with him.”* Respondent had a similar topic about having the extra time saying *“Yes it took less time to prepare the activity more time to play.”*

This was a major change because in a lot of the respondent’s answers, they said they did not have enough time to spend with their families. With these activities, it gave parents and/or guardians ideas for their children. Respondent 8 said *“Yes it did, because most time we got other stuff to do so not able to do to much together”.* The same theme was identified with respondent 11 saying “*Yes, it was something that we made time for we don’t always get that chance*”. There are common themes that are seen throughout the surveys that were received. From the responses that were given, parental involvement has changed because of the activities that were presented.

**Conclusion**

Most of the participants in this study were satisfied with the activities that were given. With the activities, this gave parents opportunities to spend time with their children in their household. According to the findings, parents that were involved in this research has demonstrated beneficial affects towards parent involvement. Students have researched parent involvement by a questionnaire after doing these activities with their children. After analyzing, findings have demonstrated common themes that were very beneficial for the household. Findings also showed that education that parents received is a common factor towards parental involvement. It is important to acknowledge parental involvement in the life of the youth because this can because future affects in their lives. As you can see, there has been factors found to parental involvement and with activities involved in the household, this can be changed.

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