

How Parent Involvement Impacts Families with Children in Head Start

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Introduction

Today parents are not involved enough with their children both in the classroom and at home. Being involved can impact a child's long-term life, as things like reading to them have been proven to help their cognitive brain development (Lamb-Parker, Piotrkowski, Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Clark, & Peay, 2001). A child's early lifestyle can impact children's health, and this is why it is essential for parents to get involved early on (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). This is why parental involvement is important and the purpose of this study was.

Abstract

The issue that led to a need to research is knowing how having parents involved impacted a child's life and how different programs can help parents get involved. A particular program that was studied was Head Start. Head Start works with children and parents to try and increase family involvement and academic success. Head Start is meant to give low-income children a "boost" going into kindergarten (MERVIS, 2011). Both in the classroom and at home, parents are a vital successor to their child's success in the classroom. It is essential for teachers and parents to get together and discuss things like the student's behavior and academic achievement.

The purpose of this study was to see how in-home activities increase parent involvement for families with children in Head Start. The central phenomenon that will be explored is how that time parents spend with their children impact them and their home life. The participants that will be studied are 89 families in the southern rural area in Virginia that have children in Head Start. The research will take place at Longwood

University in southwestern Virginia by analyzing data sent from the parents with children in Head Start.

The data that will be collected will centralize from an optional survey that was sent home with the children, along with the activities to be given to their parents. This study uses mixed methods with a variety of different qualitative and quantitative responses. The qualitative responses were a variety of short answer questions on the survey sent home and were analyzed through open coding converted to axial coding. The quantitative responses were a variety of multiple-choice along with a few fill in the blank questions on the surveys.

Themes and statistical results that will likely arise in this study is a variety of responses on how the families either enjoyed or did not enjoy the activities as well as a few different themes within the qualitative responses. The themes found throughout the qualitative responses were as follows: parent involvement, resource restrictions, and skills acquired during these activities. The response rate was another key finding with the surveys. Of the 89 surveys that were sent out, 34 families completed the surveys or 38%.

Practical implications always come with doing a search study. Some of the ones that could of came along with this research study is things such as the kids not giving the activities and surveys to their families or the surveys being lost on their way back to Longwood University.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is defined as parents that are involved in both home and school settings meant to support their child's emotional well-being (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). More is being found out about how parental involvement can

influence a child's performance in school. This has been focused on their emotional state of mind at home and inside school (Niehaus, & Adelson, ,2014). How emotionally prepared a student is for school, often determines how well a student performs in school. It is also crucial for a parent to know the teacher's instructional goals so they can be involved with the student to help achieve those goals. Head Start is a program to get parents involved with students because it encourages parents to participate in activities in school. Studies show that a crucial part of parental involvement outside of school is revolved around elementary school literature (Lamb-Parker, Piotrkowski, Baker, Kessler-Sklar, Clark, & Peay, 2001). Reading to children has been shown to help a child's cognitive brain development, which is crucial in early childhood. Since all of these factors are so vital to the growth of a young child, this is why it is crucial to study the effects and levels of participation by the children's parents.

Head Start

The Head Start program is defined as a federal program that has goals to provide poverty-stricken and disabled families' children with access to pre-kindergarten education (Koedel, & Techapaisarnjaroenkit , 2012). The children in this program have been proven to be more successful throughout school, but it is hard to directly compare children who attended Head Start, and those who haven't (Koedel, & Techapaisarnjaroenkit, 2012; Hinitz, 2014; MERVIS, 2011). Pre-school education is not the only thing that these young children are lacking, but the goal of Head Start is primarily an educational "starting program". Head Start is an enormous program that is well funded. In the year 2011, Head Start had a budget of 7.56 billion dollars and only

served 40% of the children eligible for the program (MERVIS, 2011). Per child, Head Start's mean average cost is around seven to nine thousand (Deming, 2009).

Along with pre-kindergarten education, Head Start also promotes parental involvement by creating activities that both the parent and the kid can collaborate on. Head start also provides these poverty-stricken families with critical necessities such as medical, dental, and mental health insurance assistance, as well as child development assistance (Deming, 2009).

Race and Ethnicity

Head Start and parental involvement strategies should consider race and ethnicity into their plans because of the result of decades of institutionalized racism in this country, race and ethnicity play a factor in the institutional care they receive. For example, it has been shown that African American children are more inclined to attend preschool than white children, but they could receive lower-quality educational care (Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2005). Hispanic children are also less likely than white children, but the types of preschool that different racial groups can be different (Karol, & Gonzalez, 2011). Black and Hispanic children are more likely to receive a prekindergarten education like Head Start (Magnuson, & Waldfogel, 2005).

Data and Methods

Study Design

We worked with families involved with Head Start in the southern rural area of Virginia. Within that population, we worked with a sample size of 86 different families within that region.

Dr. Bidwell's class, created 5 different activities for the students to take home for the parents and students to complete. Along with the activities, surveys were also sent home with the students to be given to their parent or guardian. Attached to the surveys was a 5-dollar Walmart gift certificate. The completed surveys were then picked up by a Longwood associated affiliate and brought back to be analyzed. The compliance rate achieved from the surveys was 34 out of the 86 or 40%.

Procedure

The surveys and activities were given to the teachers of the kids in the Head Start program. These children ages 3-5 then took the surveys and activities home to their parents, where they completed the activities along with the optional survey. We followed research ethics by adding a checkbox asking if they agreed to the statement survey instructions.

Survey Measures

Included in the survey were a variety of quantitative measures that were asked in the form of close-ended questions. Examples of these questions consisted from the following choices. Please choose the most appropriate level of completion for this activity.

a) Attempted and completed b) attempted but did not complete c) Did not attempt (If you did not attempt this activity, please skip to the next section of the survey) How long did it take you and your child/children to complete the activity? a) 0-10 minutes b) 11 - 20 minutes. c) 21 - 30 minutes d) Longer than 30 minutes

Qualitative Data Findings

The results of the open-ended questions were analyzed using open coding converted into axial coding. After analyzing the results, there were three concurrent themes found

throughout the data. These themes were “parent involvement,” “resource restrictions,” and “skills acquired during these activities.”

The theme “parent involvement” was mentioned indirectly in the majority of the surveys. Respondent 1 was influenced by the activities and stated, “ we learn to do teamwork.” Respondent 2 said that they enjoyed “ time being spent together and being able to do crafts.” Both of these quotes have the common theme of “parent involvement”, and they enjoyed the time they were able to spend with their young ones. Respondent 5 stated, “ our family was able to bond. We learned that we can bond and have fun at the same time”. This quote is substantially vital to “parent involvement.” Respondent 5 sounded like the activities helped their family learn how to have fun together, while also learning. Respondent 10 also enjoyed the activities and it helped their family have fun and the activities were a way to “promote healthy family activities” they stated.

Unfortunately, the theme “resource restrictions” was a reoccurring one throughout the data. Parents or guardians of Head Start often have resource resections, whether it is time or financial instability, and it was shown throughout the Qualitative data. While Respondent 11 did enjoy the activities, they stated, “ yes it was something that we made time for, we don't always get that chance.” This means that Respondent 11 has time resections whether they are working or have other things going on. Respondent 13 had a different type of “resource restriction” as they stated, “I didn't have to look for things or go to the store to buy supplies. I don't have transportation.” Respondent 10 had the same restriction as Respondent 11. They have time resections, as Respondent 10 stated, “ because been a busy mom of two it's hard to come home and try to think of something to do.”

The third theme that was found through the qualitative data was “ skills acquired during these activities.” Respondent 6 particularly liked the sugar tray activity as they stated, “The sugar tray was my favorite as it helped my young one with writing their name.” This activity helped this respondent better learn how to write their name, which is an essential skill at a young age. Respondent 15 also had a positive learning experience with the activities. They said that “ we all gained experience in following directions and working together.” Respondent 16’s response was similar to the one of Respondent 15 as they stated, “We gained that we can all work together and have fun.” A positive skill required in the influence of the activities seemed to be teamwork as Respondent 1 stated, “we learn to do team work.”

In conclusion, through open coding converted to axial coding, the themes listed above were the ones most prevalent in the surveys. These themes also prove to increase parent involvement in children by giving them resources they did not already have and teaching them essential skills. Regardless of the families’ lack of transportation, race, or socioeconomic status, each activity gave families a chance to spend time and have fun together. Thus, increasing parent involvement.

Quantitative Data Findings

Out of the 34 reported surveys, the dependent variable chosen was how much their family enjoyed the activity, and the independent variable was how long it took each respondent to complete the activity. Specifically, question 12, the dependent variable question was “on a scale of 1-10, how much did this activity help to improve you and your child’s/children’s relationship? The independent variable, question 8, was “How

long did it take you and your child/children to complete the activity? The answers provided ranged from 0 to longer than 30 minutes.

The dependent variable, enjoyment of the activity, was analyzed using univariable statistics and mean, median, and mode. After analyzing the statistics through SPSS, it was found that 33 out of the 34 respondents or (97.1%) chose a number between 5-10, and 1 out of the 34 or (2.9%) of the 34 respondents chose a number between 0-5. The mean, median and mode of the data was found to be 9.44, 10, and 10.

Table 1

Enjoyment of animal dice activity

Valid	Frequency	Valid percent
1-5	1	2.9%
5-10	33	97.1%
Total	34	100%

The independent variable, parent involvement, was also analyzed using univariable statistics and mean, median, and mode. After analyzing the statistics through SPSS, it was found that out of the 34 respondents 33 of them responded to the question. Out of the 33 that responded to the question, it was found that 5 out of the 33 respondents or (15.2%) spent 0-10 minutes, 9 out of the 33 respondents or (27.3%) spent between 11- 20 minutes, 9 out of the 33 respondents or (27.3%) spent between 21-30 minutes, and 10 out of 33 or (30.3%) of respondents spent longer than 30 minutes on the Animal Dice activity. The mean, median and mode of the data were found to be 2.73, 3, and 4.

Table 3

Parent involvement		
Valid	Frequency	Percent
0-10 minutes	5	15.2%
11-20 minutes	9	27.3%
21-30 minutes	9	27.3%
30 plus minutes	10	30.3%
Total	33	100%

Then we compared the dependent variable, enjoyment of the activity, and the independent variable, parental involvement, using bi-variate analysis. It is easy to compare the two using bi-variate analysis, as it is easy to see the relationship between them. The table below is the means of the bi-variate, and it is showing that the more time that was spent on the activity, the more the family enjoyed the activity on average. The mean of the bi-variate was found to be 9.20, 8.44, 9.89, and 10.

Table 4 Mean of bi-variant

	Mean
0-10 minutes	9.20
11-20 minutes	8.44
21- 30 minutes	9.89
30 plus minutes	10
total	9.42

After reviewing all of the quantitative data, it was found that yes, activities do support family activity and increase overall parental involvement. The fact that (57.6%) of Respondents spent more than 11 minutes on the Animal Dice Activity shows that parental assistance was needed for the activities. There were 5 activities in total, and if most of them spent a reasonable amount of time on the Animal Dice Activity, they, in theory, spent just as much time on the others.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main point of the research project was to see how parent involvement impacts the lives of families with children in Head Start. Through mixed methods, we found a positive interaction between children and their families that participated in the activities. Many of the families enjoyed the activities and were saying their children learned various different skills while participating in the activities. The reason it matters for parents to get involved with their children at a young age is it impacts them emotionally and in the classroom and allows them overall to achieve more success (Niehaus, & Adelson, ,2014).

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