**Parent Involvement Within Head Start Program**

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 **Abstract**

This mixed method study looks at the parent and child/children relationship through the Head Start program. The Head Start program is simply made to help those who come from a lower SES get a jump start to their education. This study was through Longwood University Sociology Department where students sent out five different activities with the supplies and directions attached. This study was completed to analyze and collect data to see if the activities given to the families will help the parent and child/children interaction. The main purpose of this mixed method study was to see if the parents and child/children relationship would improve with the help of given activities as well as what parents like to help be more involved with their child/children. To gain data about the activities and parent and child/children relationships, a survey was sent out which included questions that allowed researchers’ to gain quantitative and qualitative findings. The data collected in this mixed method study allowed one to gain data on what activities parents and child/children liked as well as what got the family most involved. The quantitative findings allowed the researchers to gain the statistical aspect on this mixed method study which also allowed one to gain data on what the child/children learned and liked. The qualitative findings showed what the parents’ feelings and thoughts on the activities were which was filled out on the survey that was sent home to the families. The activities given were seen to be a success and families loved the idea and wanted more. The activities given to the families did exactly what it was supposed to which was to get the families more involved with not only each other but also with education.

 **Introduction**

Many researchers’ have studied the Head Start program and the effects it has within the families. Similar studies have been conducted to see the parent’s involvement for those who do participate in the Head Start programs. This mixed method study was conducted in three different counties’ Prince Edward County, Cumberland County, and Nottoway County which are all counties that are seen to have families in lower SES. The mixed method study looked at these three counties and was able to gain data on family involvement as well as if one was given the activity and supplies would they complete it. Family involvement was seen to be low in families that come from a lower SES. Some studies had harder times depicting what is the main factor to parents being less involved which creates different studies to see what can get the parents more involved with their child/children. The two main topics to look at while this mixed method study was being conducted were: If a parent is given an activity by Head start then you will see more participation and involvement between the parent and child/children as well as parent between education and educators and If an activity is given to a parent and child who are part of the head start program in Prince Edward County, Nottoway County, Cumberland County you then will see an involvement increase between the parent and child/children.

**Literature Review**

**Parent Involvement and Head Start.** Researchers’ findings suggest that the program Head Start provides more parent involvement. By providing more parent involvement it can assist to better exposure for endorsing a better product of parent and child involvement (Ansari and Gershoff, 2016). A social support system for a family whether if it is a casual or proper support system it is important to maintain for a healthy mind physically and emotionally (Hanley, Tasse, Aman and Pace, 1998). Head start directors arranged information to the parents on what the head start center can provide and what it can do to one’s family to help get more engagement from the parents who are in the Head Start program (Ansari and Gershoff, 2016). Researchers’ found that parents who seem to have more things on their plate and or seem to face problems are seen to be less involved with their child (Ansari and Gershoff, 2016). Parents whoes children are a part of a Head Start program are seen to take part in at least one of the activities given to them. The families were provided with five different activities with all the supplies for one to complete the activity and were given an activity once a day for one week. By the children completing at least one activity should give them more interaction between one another. Researchers’ found out that roughly 98% of the parents will do at least on activity with their child (Ansari and Gershoff, 2016). Parent and child’s relationship may rise if the schools help use their strategies, they may see a rise in parents’ ownership, accountably, and their social networks (Bower and Griffin, 2011).

 **SES and Head Start.** Some findings that were displayed the different mixtures of the parent’s educational involvement. These findings showed that this was beneficial for the children who take part in different racial and ethical groups (Day and Dotterer, 2018). Researchers’ imply that the preschool programs can increase the family’s strength as they acquire further development of their child (Jarrett, Coba-Rodriquez, 2015). Findings indicate that boosting a mother’s supportiveness can impact a child emotionally which can help benefit a child to be prepared and ready for early learning (Brophy-Herb, Zajicek- Farber, Bocknek, McKelvey, and Stansbury, 2013). Researchers’ have found that maternal supportiveness and a child’s emotional adaptation are known to be essential for the development of the child’s school readiness. This is especially important for the children who come from low-income families who are seen to be at a higher risk for their child not to be in the state of learning (Brophy-Herb, et al, 2013). Researchers’ conducted qualitative interviews to people who are low-incomed as well as African American women who have children who are in the preschool Head Start program to gain information on low incomed family’s engagement with their child and their education. (Jarett, Coba- Rodriquez, 2015). Some of the researchers’ findings indicated that programs that are made for early childhood development such as Head Start is a pragmatic way to support those families who are in a non-parental home-based environment and have children who are at the age to begin preschool (Pratt, Lipscomb, and Schmitt, 2014). Findings from researchers’ have shown that mothers who already show great supportiveness to their children will be able to sustain a higher educational growth level in their children than those mothers who show less supportiveness (Brophy-Herb, et al, 2013).

 **Methods and Data**

**Subject Design/ Sample.** In this mixed method study, we will be looking at 86 families who are part of the Head Start Program. The Head Start program serves for families who are from a low-income family to help get them ready for school and helps them get a jump start before they start school. In this study we will be looking at 86 families who live in a rural southern county in Virginia. These families are located throughout three counties which are: Cumberland, Nottoway, and Prince Edward County. The families we are studying have children that are around the age three to five. The families will be sent five different games that are provided through Longwood University’s Sociology class. Throughout this process we will be incorporating quantitative and qualitative questions to gain data about the families who participated in these activities. The quantitative data we will be looking for will be answered by the families through closed end questions where the qualitative data will be gained through open ended questions that will be answered by the families who participated in the activities provided to them. The response rate was 44%.

**Procedure.** Surveys were attached to the last activity that was sent home to the families: The surveys were given to the teachers, who then distributed to the children who are in the Head Start classroom. Surveys had a $5 gift card to Walmart for taking part in these activities and completing the survey. Surveys will consist of quantitative and qualitative questions for the families to complete. The IRB states “Survey Instructions: 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. Do you agree to these directions? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No”. The IRB gives researches’ the consent from the parents of the children who have taken part in the activities and allows us the researchers’ to analyze and collect the data that was written in the surveys to see if parent involvement was increased through the five activities given.

 **Quantitative Measures.** Quantitative data will be gained through closed ended questions that will be asked on the survey given to the families. Some questions that will be asked are *How long did it take you and your child/children to complete the activity?* These activities were made to gain data to see if the activities improved the parent and child/children involvement. Parents answered these quantitative responses to see what was good about the activities given to them and things they want to change for the next years activities. These questions allow one to gain data on exactly how the families felt during the activities as well as if they enjoyed all of them or not.Activities are planned to take around thirty minutes, so the options given will be times under thirty minutes and times after thirty minutes or exactly thirty minutes. Families will be also asked *from the following choices, please choose the most appropriate level of completion for this activity. Answer choices will be attempted and completed, attempted but did not complete, and did not attempt (If you did not attempt this activity, please skip to the next section of the survey).* Families will be also asked *On a scale of 0-10, how much did your family enjoy this activity? (0=Not at all, 10=Very much)*

**Qualitative Measures.** Questions on the survey will be opened ended questions for us to gain data about the families that took part in these in activities. Families will be asked *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?* Answers will vary for each family and will be examined for data after its completed.

 Looking at quantitative responses descriptive analyses were conducted using SPSS 25 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). We will be transcribing qualitative data into a word document and will be coded by theme.

**Mixed Method Analysis**. Conducting, collecting, and analysis quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methods analysis is used to find descriptive research.

 **Quantitative Findings**

**Dependent Variable.** The dependent variable in this data analysis is the activities given to the families. Looking at the responses we have received which was 38, and looking at a survey question that states “How long did it take you and your child/children to complete the activity?” Table one shows the results to this question and shows data from Prince Edward County, Cumberland County, and Nottoway County. Looking at table one it documents that 25.7% of families took over 30 minutes to complete this activity while 20.0% took about ten minutes or less to complete the activity given to them. Data shows that 25.7% of the families took 11-20 minutes to complete this activity as well as 28.6% of the families took 21-30 minutes to complete this activity. The frequency shows the amount of times it presented or answered in this data. The dependent variable is seen as a Nominal variable which also is categorical variable which allows one to gain access and information relating to the series of values that are given by the respondents.

Table One

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activities Given   |   |
| Frequency | Valid Percent |
| 0-10 minutes | 7 | 20.0 |
| 11-20 minutes | 9 | 25.7 |
| 21-30 minutes | 10 | 28.6 |
| Longer than 30 minutes | 9 | 25.7 |
| Total | 35 | 100.0 |

Length it took to Complete Activity

**Independent Variable.** The independent variable in this analysis is Parent Involvement. With the independent variable we want to gain information on if a parent receives activities with

the supplies would they complete it, and would it make them more involved with their child/children. Table two shows data from a continuous variable meaning respondents had to answer the question on a scale from 0-10. The question asked on survey was “On a scale from 0-10 how much did this activity help to improve you and your child’s/children’s relationship?” Again, data is being analyzed from families in the Head Start program in Prince Edward County, Cumberland County, and Nottoway County. While looking at this data we collected, as a researcher I decided to find the mean which is the average answer between all respondents. The average depicted was an 8.85 which states majority of families have said that these activities have better improved their relationship with their child/children. Many families stated and or responded to the fact that it did increase parent and child/children involvement as seen below in table two.

Table Two

Parent and Child/children Relationship

|  |
| --- |
|  Statistics |
| Mean | 8.85 |
| Median  | 10.00 |
| Mode | 10 |

 **Bivariate.**  Looking at the bivariate between two of the questions asked on the survey that was sent out, we gained data between the two and their relationship with each other. One question simply asked, “From the following choices, please choose the most appropriate level of completion for this activity.” The other question from the survey asked, “On a scale from 0-10, how much did this activity help to improve you and your child’s/children’s relationship?” Through coding we changed 0,5,6,7,8, and 9 as variable one seen in chart three, 10 was also coded but was changed to variable two as seen in chart three as well. This chart is showing the compassion of the independent variable which is parent involvement and the dependent variable which is the activities given to the families. Looking at table three it explains how the activities given to the families were completed fully and that they activities did in fact help the relationship between the parent and child/children.

Table Three

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  1 |  2 |  Total |
| DV  | 1.00 | Count | 12 | 3 | 15 |
|  | 2.00 | Count | 20 | 0 | 20 |
| Total |  | Count | 32 | 3 | 35 |

Activities and Parent Involvement Crosstabulation

 **Qualitative Findings**

Through coding three different themes were discovered by looking at 19 out of 86 Head Start activity surveys. The three themes that were found through coding were family involvement, favorite activity, and family gains.

**Family Involvement.** Examining the given surveys that we have received family involvement was seen consecutively in the surveys. Respondent two says “Well enjoyed the activities.” Respondent three says “time we spent together. “Respondent five explains “Our family was able to bond.” Respondent seven wrote “We enjoyed sitting down together during the activity as a family.” Respondent eight says “It had us spend more time together.” These respondents are explaining in simple terms how the games increased family involvement and that you see that the families were able to come together to do these activities. Family involvement was seen throughout every survey relating how the families liked the games and how the families were able to work together.

**Family Gains.** In majority of the surveys it is explained that the families gain something out of the activities that were given to them. Respondent one says, “We learn to do teamwork.” Respondent three states “Being able to do crafts, it’s opened the door for other simple activities.” Respondent four say’s “She learned how to take turns.” Respondent five mentions “We can learn and have fun at the same time.” Respondent five also mentions “We all gained experience in following directions and working together,” Respondent seven explains “We will allow him to do more activities.” While completing each game families gain new perspectives as well as new ways that they can interact with their child and what kinds of games they can play that will be beneficial. Families not only gain new games and information, but they also learn new things about their child as well as help their child advance in some way from the activities given.

**Favorite Activity.**  While reviewing the surveys each family would state what activity they liked the best as well as what activity works best within their home. In a lot of the surveys the Animal Dice game was mentioned a lot. Respondent four states “Animal Dice because my daughter had the most fun with it didn’t want to stop playing it.” Respondent 12 says “We loved the “Animal Dice Activity” most because not only was it hands on; it was very informative and super interactive.” Respondent 17 then states that “All of them” were their favorite. Respondent 18 says “The animal dice activity was very fun; it was interesting for me to see all the animals he identified. I believe families enjoyed this game because it brought the child to use their cognitive thinking on memorizing the animals within their actions as well as they are using physical activity. Although many families enjoyed each game that was given to them, the Animal Dice game was one that happened to be mentioned the most. This gets to see what the parent thinks about the games which incorporates their involvement.

  **Conclusion**

 The main purpose of this mixed method case study was to analyze and collect data relating to Head Start and the parent and child/children’s involvement. This study was also conducted to see if activities were given to the families would it improve their interaction and involvement with their child/children. This studied showed that families involvement increased when given the activities and supplies to do with their child/children. By conducting this mixed method study researchers’ gained that by supply the families activities and supplies that it will help with the families interaction as well as is good for cognitive mobility.

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