**The Effects of Parent Involvement on Child’s Education**

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**Abstract**

 Parent involvement has been a big part of children’s success. Studies have shown problems with parent involvement in single parent households. For example, one study suggests that having a father figure absent does not affect the child’s overall emotional development but does affect the financial stability of the household. (Flouri, 2019) The purpose of the study is to analyze research about different areas and problems in parent involvement. The participants are children from three to five years old, parents, Head Start, and teachers. The data that will be collected is mixed methods consisting of survey results conducted by parents of Head Start children, information from peer-reviewed literature, and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from survey questions. The themes in the study are relationships between children, parents, and teachers, and parent involvement effects on children’s educational success. Statistical results that will be found is variation in levels of stress in parent involvement. The practical implications of the study are finding ways to provide assistance to Head Start households and pave the way for further research to be done on parent involvement.

**Introduction**

 “Studies show that students from one-parent households have test scores that are about .30 standard deviations lower than two-parent households.” (Mulkey, 1992) Parent Involvement in their children’s education, especially in a single parent household, has effects on their child's educational success and development. The lack of both parents being in the household can fracture a child’s development and their academic capability. An example that will be looked further into in the study is the lack of a present father figure in the household can lead to financial instability. (Flouri, 2019) Examples like this all have an effect on the potential of a child’s success in academics as well as overall growth.

The importance of this study is to understand the effects that different areas of the household have on the wellbeing of the children and what could be helped or researched further. Some of the different areas that will be discussed concern the communication between parents as well as with the teachers, financials, and overall involvement. This is more important now than ever because single-parents households are becoming more common. One study talks about the effects parental divorce has on children’s wellbeing. (Garriga, 2020) The study analyzes how the communication between the parents can have lasting effects on their children and how this plays into their success in education. Studies like these are important to research about because they provide information that could lead to other questions that should be asked.

 As important as these studies are, they do have some drawbacks. Some deficiencies that will be seen in the analysis of other studies is the lack of diverse methods of gaining information and research into the effects of parent involvement. The main ways of conducting research found in these studies is through surveys and interviews. A problem with only having two methods of research is it takes out the ability to gain results and information that could be received via other methods of research. This study brings awareness to the lack of diversity of research methods which will hopefully change given enough time. The more that new methods will be used to conduct research on similar issues, the more that people will get involved and bring in more statistics on areas of concern. This research will especially help parents of Head Start children as well as other single parent households. The analysis of research studies as well as the collection of survey results will call attention to the impact of children’s educational outcomes, provide data-driven insight, and highlight gaps for further research.

**Literature Review**

**How is Parent Involvement in Children’s Education effected in a Single Parent or Divorced Household?**

How is parent involvement in children's education affected by divorce or a single parent household? This is the main topic of discussion for this literature review. Many studies have shown that children living in a single parent household or a household experiencing a divorce typically have more issues or obstacles to hurdle in their educational journey. (Garriga, 2020) This literature review will review some of these studies which test various theories from different angles. This review will focus on the methods used to conduct research, the angles at which the methods were used, the results of the studies, and a comparison of the studies.

**Epstein’s Model**

 The main topic in Epstein’s (1995) model was ‘How families and the schooling system work together and separately to ensure success for their children’. “The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families.” (Epstein, 1995, Intro.) The different methods used in the study to conduct the research were surveys and field studies involving teachers, the parents and students at elementary and high school levels for comparison, and the parents involved were shown a table of things they could do to help with their children's education and overall involvement. Action teams were also created to record the progress of family involvement and provide assistance and learning opportunities for the families. The results in this study were used to implement new and improved strategies for getting families the help they need and providing assistance for the parents and children to further their success. The only issue with the article was that the study was conducted in the mid 1990’s and was later updated in 2010 which means that a lot of the information in the study is outdated.

**Parent Involvement and Relationship**

“The Causal Effects of Parental Divorce and Parental Temporary Separation” (Garriga, 2020) article’s purpose is to analyze the psychological effects and well-being of parental divorce and parent involvement. “The latter is measured in a way to capture not only parental conflicts before separation but also communication, affection, and emotions among the couple.” (Garriga, 2020, p.1) This is a longitudinal study that involved over 18,000 participants. This is a good thing because this broadens the results, but the issue is that the information was singled out to only a couple of schools and select individuals which narrowed the study a little bit.

This information leads to another study founded by Tallman “Member Adjustment in Single Parent Families*.”* (1985) The issue with this particular study is that it was published in 1986, so it is extremely outdated. Both of these studies used surveys and similar frameworks to conduct the research and examine the results. The author listed multiple findings through the study such as “higher economic status increases single parent satisfaction” (Tallman, pg.2) and “the children’s adjustment to paternal absence is facilitated by mother’s personality attributes” (Tallman, pg.2). The reliance of mostly only surveys does not allow the expansion of results and the quantitative statistics which back it up.

Another main hindrance in children's educational success is how present the father is in parental involvement. The purpose of this survey is to research how the relationship between non-resident fathers affects the behavior of children when being raised in a single mother household. This is an important article to include because it provides data about a similar issue to the previous article which left out information due to lack of submissions. The results of this study stated that non-resident father involvement had no major impact on their emotional and behavioral outcomes, but there were effects of non-resident father involvement on child temperament. Children that were in single mother households for the majority turned out to be white and younger.

**Teacher Involvement**

The “Examining the effects of ADHD symptoms and parental involvement” Condo (2022) article examines the effects of ADHD and parental involvement on children’s academic achievement. The main method the researchers used to gain their results was the use of a clinically evaluated sample of 162 children who were recruited through a university children’s learning/behavioral health clinic and community resources. The researcher of this study concluded that “Parental involvement does not serve as a ‘protective factor’ against academic underachievement and may even predict lower rather than higher academic achievement for clinically evaluated children in general.” (Condo, 2022, p.2) Another article talks about how the increase of parental communication and involvement in their child’s education increases their academic performance and success. This article by Lamb (2016), “Parental Participation Improves Student Academic Achievement” did a good job at including around 2,600 students in their surveys which is an improvement on the previous study. The two articles did use Epstein’s framework to analyze the results.

One study by Ferrell, “The Effects of Single-Parent households versus two-parent households” (2009) examines the differences between single-parent and two-parent households. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study over the course of five years with the same students to analyze academic success and emotional maturity. This study showed that the children living in a two-parent household performed significantly better than those living in a single-parent household. The issue with this study is that it relied solely on what the surveys resulted in and no other method or framework. The final article took a slightly different approach. The “Teachers’ experiences of parents’ involvement in Foundation Phase learning during COVID-19"study by Grober (2022) focused on the experience the teachers had in two aspects of teaching. One aspect was on the different teachers' total years in the teaching field and the second aspect was the overall performance during the COVID-19 pandemic virtual learning environment. This study was conducted during 2020, so it is still pretty up to date. What the study found out was that not only was communication lacking between the students and the teachers but also with the parents as well. The teachers had a hard time consoling the parents with the academic techniques being used as well as the students slacking off and not keeping the parents in the loop.

A main takeaway is that the overall success in a children’s education relies on the children themselves. Parent involvement helps but will not be the overall deciding factor according to these studies. It is important to analyze different frameworks as well as different methods of investigation. Surveys, interviews, analysis, and research are all good ways to gain further information on this topic but using them all to gain a better understanding is an even better way.

**Data and Methods**

**Instrument**

An online survey questionnaire was created by a research collaborative at Longwood University. The survey created in Qualtrics included an informed consent question and open and close-ended items. There are 23 close-ended items that cover parent needs including resources, comfort, time, finances, mental health needs, and demographics. The questionnaire included three open-ended items. The questionnaire had an estimated completion time of 10 minutes.

**Sample**

The convenience sample for this project is parents and guardians of Head Start children who are between the ages of three and five years old who reside in seven counties in Central Virginia. There are approximately 119 families in this sample population. Head Start headquarters e-mailed the online survey to county Head Start teachers. Teachers then e-mailed the survey to all families in their classroom. Surveys were e-mailed home at least three times during data collection. This resulted in 26 surveys being submitted. The response rate was approximately 25%. No incentive was offered for completing the survey.

**Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The dependent variable of interest was **‘**How involved do you feel in your child’s education?’ The attributes were “on a scale of 0 – 10.” The independent variable of interest was ‘Does financial stress prevent you from being involved in your child’s education?’ The attributes were “yes often, yes sometimes, and no.”

**Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative analysis was based on the open-ended items. Thematic coding was used to analyze parent responses.

Independent Variable: The independent variable for this study is **Does financial stress prevent you from being involved in your child’s education?** The standard deviation and the mean was calculated using 25 responses.

**Findings**

**Quantitative Findings**

 The dependent variable is How involved do you feel in your child’s education? This is asked on a 0 (Not at all) to 10 (an extreme amount) scale. The independent variable is Does financial stress prevent you from being involved in your child’s education? Respondents answered “yes”, “no”, “sometimes” or “other”. The hypothesis is parents who experience higher levels of financial stress will report lower levels of involvement in their child's education.

Independent Variable



Dependent variable



The mean score for how involved do you feel in your child’s education was 8.81. The standard deviation was 2.06. This means that about 68% of students answered between 2.06 and 8.81. This shows that answers on this variable varied greatly but the mean is high overall.

Table 1

*Percent of how involved parents feel in your child’s education*

*(Count divided by # of surveys multiplied by 100) to get percentage*

|  Parent involvement  |  Count |  Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  2 |  1  |  4.76  |
|  5 |  1  |  4.76  |
|  7 |  1  |  4.76  |
|  8 |  4  |  19.04  |
|  9 10 |  1  13  |  4.76  61.90  |

*Note. N= 25 only 21 answered these questions*

Table 1 shows the majority of respondents answered that they felt very involved in their child’s education (61.90%). Only one respondent stated that they did not feel very involved in their child’s education.

Table 2

*Mean of parent involvement by financial stress inhibiting their involvement*

|  Parent  Involvement |  Mean |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  Yes |  7.50  |   |
|  Sometimes |  9.50  |   |
|  No |  8.75  |   |
|  Other |  Missing  |   |
|  |   |   |

*Note. N=25*

Table 2 shows the mean of parent involvement by financial stress inhibiting their involvement.

The original hypothesis stated, ‘parents who experience higher levels of financial stress will report lower levels of involvement in their child's education.’ But what the data shows is that the mean between yes, which is 7.50, and sometimes, which is 9.50, is where the difference is found for the comparison of these variables. Between yes and sometimes, there is a difference of 2 which is the largest difference in the table.

**Qualitative Findings**

 Two open-ended questions were taken from the survey and analyzed further. One question asked how involved parents thought they were in their child’s education and the other question asked if those parents thought that financial stress prevented them from being involved. The answers to the questions were taken and analyzed from the 25 total surveys submitted by the Head Start parents and themes were created to better understand the meaning behind the results. The themes created consist of parent involvement, financials, and deviation of results.

**Parent Involvement**

 A parent’s involvement in their child’s education is important because it has an effect on the academic and emotional development of the children. Divorce and single-parent households tend to stump or impact the development of the children in a negative way. “Mothers in stable single-mother families who provided no data on father involvement were younger, more likely to be white, and have boys.” (Flouri, 2012) Children growing up and being surrounded by a parental divorce or a single-parent household were seen to have more developmental issues especially in academics. “Parental involvement had significant negative associations with math and overall academic achievement.” (Condo, 2022) However, parents who experience divorce or separation with the other parent who volunteer to take surveys tend to exert some level of dishonesty in their answers. “We only used the GRIMS scale for responses from the mother, as the fathers’ questionnaire showed a high percentage of missing cases.” (Garriga, 2020) This should be taken into account when reviewing the results of the Head Start survey.

 The dependent variable of the study, How involved do you feel in your child’s education?, was ranked on a scale of 0 (not involved) to 10 (very involved). The results showed that the deviation among responses was between 2.08 and 8.8. This means that the majority of the parents of Head Start children said that they vary on the scale of how involved they are in their child’s education. The results also show that the mean score was also relatively high which means that the majority of parents felt very involved in their child’s education. As seen in recent literature, some parents that experience a divorce and are in a single-parent household have a tendency to show a level of dishonesty when viewing their own involvement. Parents in single-parent households will have to fill the roles of both parental guardians which takes up more time and effort which in some cases takes away from how involved they could be in their child’s educational development and success.

**Financials**

 Financial stress plays a major role in how involved parents feel they are in their child’s education. How much money a parental figure brings into the household is an important factor when it comes to financial stress, or lack thereof. The survey question, does financial stress prevent you from being involved in your child’s education?, was answered using the attributes yes, sometimes, and no. As seen in the survey results which were expanded upon in the quantitative findings, two respondents said yes, 6 respondents said sometimes, and 13 respondents said no. The largest variation in this survey question is seen between the attributes ‘sometimes’ and ‘no’. This means that the majority of the respondents feel that financial stress, for the most part, does not interfere with their involvement in their child’s education and if so, only sometimes. “Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.” (Epstein, 1995, pg.7) There is still a large number of Head Start parents and households that are experiencing financial stress which is affecting their ability to be more involved in their child’s education. Parents filling out surveys are typically hesitant on disclosing forms of financial stress or information about their income because it is usually a personal topic and parents do not want a reminder that they may be struggling financially. This means that there is the possibility that the Head Start parents answering this section of the survey could have been dishonest about their current financial situation and did not want to disclose financial information.

**Deviation of Results**

 The results of the survey showed that the largest variation of the independent variable which was, does financial stress prevent you from being involved in your child’s education?, was between ‘sometimes’ and ‘no’. This means that the majority of the Head Start parents that picked these answers believed that financial stress does not affect their involvement in their child’s education. This still means that the people who said that financial stress does not affect their involvement are still experiencing financial stress and burdens. The results of the dependent variable, how involved do you feel in your child’s education?, show that the mean of the responses were on the higher end. This means that the majority of the responses said that they felt very involved in their child’s education. The similarities between each of the results show that the majority of the parents who answered both questions feel that financial stress does not affect their involvement and that they are very involved in their child’s education. The differences in the results are the variation between the answers. The results for the dependent variable show that the majority of parents answered similarly to each other while the results for the independent variable show answers are more spread out. This means that even though most of the parents feel involved in their child’s education, a large percentage of those parents are experiencing financial stress which is affecting their involvement.

**Conclusion**

 The main purpose of this project is to research and analyze areas that affect parent’s involvement in their child’s education especially in single parent households. A survey was created and given to parents of Head Start children to collect data on areas of their involvement and potential hindrances. A total of 25 surveys were received where two open-ended questions were further researched and analyzed. The two questions deal with how involved parents feel they are in their child’s education and if they feel that financial stress prevents them from being involved. A mean calculation was conducted where the results showed that most of the parents felt they are very involved in their child’s education and an even number of parents felt that financial stress both did and did not prevent them from being involved.

 This project researched other aspects of parent involvement and found commonalities between the findings in other studies and the survey results. Studies that were found consisted of information about communication between parents and teachers and the effects of childrens’ educational success. Another theme involved potential financial burdens and how they affect the stability within single parent households. The lack of both parents being in the household can fracture a child’s development and their academic capability. The lack of a present father figure in the household can lead to more financial instability than it does emotional instability.

 The main takeaway from this project is in a single parent household that consists of only the mother, emotional and academic stability was not as affected as much as financial stability when the father is not as present. Further research should be conducted to find ways to help with burdens as well as diversify research methods to find new and more detailed statistics. The findings of this study show that society needs to have more stable households to ensure childrens’ academic growth and capabilities.

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