

**The Effect of Family Fun Time Activities on Family Involvement and Their Relation to
Education**

Olivia Lineweaver

Department of Sociology, Longwood University

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Dr. Pederson

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Abstract

Families and the amount of time spent with children is an issue in our society, specifically not enough time being spent together. The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not Family Fun Time Activities encourage family involvement. Participants were from a number of different counties, all of whom attend the Head Start program. This is a mixed method study using both open and closed ended questions from a survey we asked participants to fill out after completing the activity. Four themes arose from the data including, responses from our clothespin activity, spending time together, learned skills, and no suggestions of improvement. Results showed participants rated level of involvement as a mean of 7.2, indicating a positive relationship between Family Fun Time Activities and involvement. Data also showed education levels at the lowest and highest ends have the highest relationship when it comes to family involvement.

Introduction

We wanted to find out whether or not Family Fun Time Activities encourage family involvement. These activities were meant to create and maintain family involvement if it was not already there prior. Children tend to do better in their current situation and in the future when they have parents or guardians who support and make time for them (Marcon, 1999). Studies have shown that parents play a key role in creating a safe and secure home environment, which then leads to encouraging learning overall (Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019). This is a very important topic because the way parents interact and care for their children, in part, can help determine their outcome in life. Many studies, including those done by Goshin, et al. (2021), Marcon (1999), and Keller, et al. (2021) have all found that being more involved boosts their child's grades and overall academics throughout their schooling.

Learning about this topic can help parents understand more and even make changes in order to create the best environment for their children. Home life and how parents treat their children at home is essential to building the foundation and encouraging learning, etc, (Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019). The activities we sent out are a great way to promote involvement at home and build that relationship in the family a little bit more. This also gives parents a chance to be able to self reflect while filling out the survey and begin to make the connections about being involved on their own. Although there is lots of research surrounding family involvement, there are still gaps in areas such as parental education levels or jobs and how that may affect the amount of involvement they provide and their child's educational achievements.

Literature Review

There is lots of research surrounding the ideas of parental involvement and its effects on children. This article reviews some of the literature surrounding these ideas as well as takes a look into the Head start program; a program developed to help less privileged or possibly struggling children get a push before they enter school. Many studies, including those done by Kyunghye and Kreutzer (2021) and Marcon (1999), have shown beneficial effects on children when parental involvement comes into play. Overall, parental involvement has been proven to have positive effects on children that last into adulthood.

Parental involvement has six main components according to Marcon (1999), and Anthonyraj and Sasikala (2019). These include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community which act as the most well known factors (Marcon, 1999; Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019). Studies have also shown that the home environment is extremely important in helping to encourage learning, so what the parents do and how they act within their homes is essential (Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019). Parents play a very important role in encouraging their children to get involved in extracurricular activities and keeping them involved as well (Goshin, et al., 2021). This goes for any activity outside of school that helps build their social skills. Parental support is a key indicator in how well children do academically, sports wise and more (Tazouti & Jarlegan, 2019; Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019). Parents truly influence their child's behavior as well as how they view the world, being supportive means these children will get the best out of their education and more. Having a solid support system also helps with achievements of all sorts. When children are encouraged, they do better (Tazouti & Jarlegan, 2019; Anthonyraj & Sasikala, 2019).

There are many positive factors surrounding parental involvement. When parents are more involved their child's grades increase as well as their behavior and motivation for their academics (Goshin, et al., 2021; Marcon, 1999; Keller, et al, 2021). Parents being in contact with their child's school has also been shown to have positive effects for both the child and parents. This idea is also relevant for after school programs and how involved parents are with their child's certain interests (Goshin, et al., 2021; Malm, et al., 2017). In the study done by Malm, et al. (2017), it showed that after school programs have positive results on individual well being. In another study by Tazouti and Jarlegan (2019), they looked at how parental self-efficacy affects parental involvement. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in their own ability to perform tasks well, or in this case, influence their children's behavior and development. The results of this study found that mothers tended to be more involved overall and that parental involvement led to higher achievement levels in their child. Other studies have found that when parents are more involved they become more confident in their overall parenting skills (Keller, et al., 2021; Tazouti & Jarlegan, 2019). In research done by Keller, et al. (2021) they found there are three significant ways parental involvement is beneficial to the children, parents and their teachers. It allows the students to be socialized to the importance of school, builds parent teacher relationships and parents have "insider information" because of these relationships.

There are also barriers to parental involvement as mentioned in studies done by Goshin, et al. (2021), Marcon (1999), and Keller, et al. (2021). Goshin, et al. (2021) states that excessive involvement can be harmful in the long run, more specifically when adolescence reaches highschool. They found this to be true by comparing data from the parents of children in primary school versus those in highschool. Through other research they have found, from other individuals, the trends seem to be the same in many cases. Children and teens especially like to

be independent so a happy medium of support needs to be found. Marcon (1999) and Keller, et al. (2021) found that in their studies there were some parents who simply did not have enough time to be as involved as other parents. This can pose as a barrier to many parents and can fluctuate. Keller, et al. (2021) also found that parents may not be as involved because of negative factors from their own lives. This could include experiences they have had, how they were raised, their beliefs, etc.

The Head start program has also been proven to be very beneficial in aiding families (Pratt, Lipscomb, & Schmitt, 2015; Kyunghee & Kreutzer, 2021). In Kyunghee and Kreutzer's (2021) study, they found that the children enrolled in this program had better relationships with their parents as well as a decrease in behavioral issues. This was a longitudinal study from 2002 to 2006 where the researchers checked in with each family and conducted a survey using the Robert Pianta scale to measure child-parent relationships. This program also gives children access to mental health resources, support for emotional well-being and support for the whole family as well. Pratt, Lipscomb, and Schmitt (2015) looked at helping non-parental families, such as those in foster care. The results of his study were very similar to traditional parental families, there was a decrease in behavioral issues, the guardians became more involved in their child's schooling and a decreased number in spankings, which had been an issue in the initial survey.

Although there is lots of literature surrounding the ideas of family involvement we are still unsure of specifics relating to parents and how exactly this affects children. We know that having a strong child-parent relationship is important and helps make children feel more wanted and encouraged to do things. This leads us to the question, do parents' level of education, their jobs, etc. affect their level of involvement with their child.

Data and Methodology

Instrument

A survey questionnaire was created by eight members of the Social Research and Program Evaluation Team at Longwood University. The survey consisted of 14 questions, 11 close-ended questions and three open-ended questions. The first question on the survey asked respondents for informed consent. Any respondents who answered “no” to the informed consent were not able to see any other questions. The survey included questions that measured family involvement, family enjoyment, evaluation of SMART objectives, and demographics. The survey was sent online through Qualtrics. Head Start teachers emailed links to the survey to parents/guardians, and children brought home books with a QR code attached.

Sample

The non-probability sample for this study was based on 17 children (ages three to five) who attend Head Start in rural Virginia. Head Start is a federally subsidized preschool for families with economic need. The clothespin counting wheel activity was created to encourage family involvement. This activity was then sent home with children to complete with their families. A children's book was also sent home with a QR code attached to the front to incentivise parents/guardians to complete the survey after they had completed the activity. Teachers sent a reminder email to parents/guardians to complete any outstanding surveys. This resulted in 4 questionnaires being completed. Overall, there was a 4% response rate. Therefore, data from previous years (2019 and 2022) on Family Fun Time Activities were added to the analysis. This resulted in 66 completed surveys to be used in analysis (four from 2023, 20 from 2022, and 42 from 2019).

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis of completed surveys is based on the close-ended questions. For this study, the dependent variable is family involvement. The item from the survey that was used to operationalize this was, “On a scale from 0 to 10, how much did this activity encourage your family to work together?” (0=not at all, 10=a great amount). For this study, the independent variable is educational attainment. The item from the survey that was used to operationalize this was, “What is the highest level of education you have completed?”. The answer attributes for this item include, “Some high school education, High school diploma or GED, Certification from a trade/vocational school, Some college education, Associate’s degree, Bachelor's degree, Graduate degree or more”. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze these variables.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis of the completed surveys (from 2019, 2022, and 2023) was based on open-ended questions from survey responses. The open-ended questions were, “What did you enjoy about this activity?”, “What are your suggestions for improving this activity?”, and “Typically, what activities do you do with your child?”. To answer the research question, “Does participation in family fun time activities affect family involvement?”. Inductive open coding was used to determine recurring themes in the respondents' responses.

Findings

Qualitative Findings

Family Fun Time Activities contained four themes. The themes I found apply to the survey’s we got back from respondents for our clothespin activity, many mentioned something about spending time together, another handful provided feedback on learned skills, and a majority said they had no suggestions.

Clothespin Activity

The first idea I found is based on the data received from our activity, the clothespin color wheel. This data is only from two out of the 38 respondents, so it is very limited. In our survey we posed the question, “What did you enjoy about this activity?”, in one of the responses we received, Respondent 23_2 stated they “Liked how to put the clothes pin on the wheel with the number.”. Respondent 23_3 said “Seeing how much my son has learned in school, knowing his colors & numbers.”. Both of these responses show that the activity was successful and enjoyable while also being informative for the children who completed it.

Spending Time Together

Another theme I found to be common across the responses was that many respondents' feedback included something about spending time together. Approximately 24/8 of the respondents included this idea in some form. One response to the question “What did your family enjoy most about these activities” from Respondent 22_10 was, “Doing them together. Alexa said she loves doing things with mom and dad.”. Another question asked was “Please explain what your family gained from these activities.”. Respondent 19_3 stated, “Time spent together and being able to do crafts. It opened the door for other simple activities.” Another response from Respondent 19_7 was “We enjoyed sitting down together doing the activity as a family. He felt like a big boy doing homework and making something with his own hands...”. All of these responses and many others all had main points referring to quality time, togetherness, bonding, family time, etc.

Learned Skills

The next theme I found was that many respondents included that their child ended up learning something from these activities. For this theme, approximately 19/38 responses included something along the lines of this topic. Again, the question that elicited the following responses

was “What did your family enjoy most about these activities?”. Respondent 22_2 stated that her child “Learned how to cut and glue and how to trace better.”. Respondent 22_16 said “Myself and my two sons enjoyed the learning outcomes that came along with the activities.”. In a different survey, a question asked “Please explain what your family gained from this activity?”, to which Respondent 19_15 answered with “We all gained experience in following directions and working together.”. These were just a few examples of the many things respondents said their children, or even them in some cases, learned after completing these activities. Education and learning was a popular consensus amongst participants.

No Suggestions

Lastly, the fourth theme I found was that many respondents said that they would not change anything about these activities. The only consistent discrepancy was that they would simplify the instructions to make it easier to understand. Approximately 26/38 respondents said they would make no changes. The question that gained these responses was “What recommendations would you suggest to make these activities better?”. Respondent 22_4 said, “None, we both enjoyed them.”. Similarly, Respondent 22_11 said, “None well planned out.”. One discrepancy I found within the data, that occurred more than once, was that respondents wanted the instructions to be simplified. In one response, Respondent 22_15 stated, “Activities with less instructions. Going over how each activity should be done was her least favorite part.”. Feedback saying they have no suggestions doesn’t provide us with anything to improve but it helps us know we are on the right track and produced successful and enjoyable activities.

Qualitative Analysis shows high success rates for Family Fun Time Activities. Data also shows high levels of enjoyment from completing activities especially when they were completed

together. This shows that these activities should continue to be sent out to families because of the positive outcomes received.

Quantitative Findings

The dependent variable is the amount of family involvement after completing the Family Fun Time Activities. This was asked and measured on a 0 (Not at all) -10 (A great amount) scale. The independent variable is the education level of the parent/guardian. Respondents chose one from the following answer choices; “Some High School”, “High School diploma or GED”, “Trade or Vocational school”, “Some College”, “Associate’s degree”, “Bachelor’s degree”, or “Graduate degree or more”. The hypothesis is that Family Fun Time Activities will encourage family involvement and that parents' education levels do not tend to affect how involved they are.

Table 1.

Descriptives of Family Involvement

	Family Involvement
Mean	7.20
Median	7.00
Mode	10.0
Standard deviation	2.60

Note: N=66

The univariate analysis of our dependent variable of family involvement is shown in the table above. Table 1 shows the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of family involvement on a scale of 0 (Not at all) -10 (A great amount). The mean found is 7.20, the standard deviation is 2.60, the median shown is 7.00 and the mode is 10.0. The majority of the

participants had a higher rating when asked about how engaged they were as a family with the most common choice (mode) being 10.0.

Figure 1.

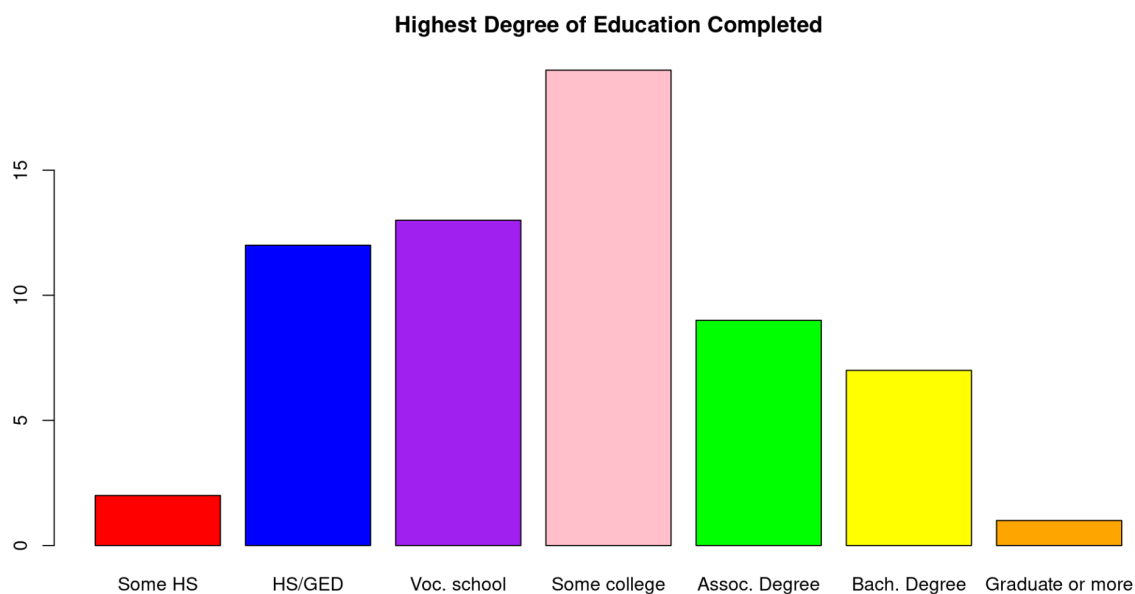


Figure 1 shows the amount of participants, out of the 38 responses we received, who chose each answer for our independent variable; highest level of education completed. Two respondents completed some high school, 12 respondents received a high school diploma or GED, 13 respondents received certification from a trade or vocational school, 18 respondents completed some college, nine respondents received an associate's degree, seven respondents received a bachelor's degree, and one respondent received a graduate degree or more.

Table 2.

Bivariate Analysis of Education

Education level		Mean	SD
Family Involvement	Some High School	8.50	2.12

High School Diploma or GED	6.42	2.71
Trade or Vocational school	7.85	2.94
Some College	6.89	2.02
Associate's degree	7.56	2.30
Bachelor's degree	6.43	4.08
Graduate degree or more	9.00	N/A

The bivariate analysis shows the relationship between our independent and dependent variables and is shown in the table above. Table 2 shows that respondents who completed some high school rated family involvement with a mean of 8.50 and a standard deviation of 2.12. Respondents who completed a high school diploma or GED rated family involvement with a mean of 6.42 and a standard deviation of 2.71. Respondents who received certification in trade or vocational school rated family involvement with a mean of 7.85 and a standard deviation of 2.94. Respondents who completed some college rated family involvement with a mean of 6.89 and a standard deviation of 2.02. Respondents who received an associate's degree rated family involvement with a mean of 7.56 and a standard deviation of 2.30. Respondents who received a bachelor's degree rated family involvement with a mean of 6.43 and a standard deviation of 4.08. Respondents who received a graduate degree or more rated family involvement with a mean of 9.00 and there was no standard deviation because there was only one response.

The original hypothesis stated that Family Fun Time Activities will encourage family involvement and that parents' education levels do not tend to affect how involved they are. But what the data shows is that "some high school" and "graduate degree or more" is where the difference is found for the comparison of these variables. All the other education levels in

between ranged from a mean of six to seven which is still a decently high rating. There is no real relationship between variables because only one respondent chose the “graduate degree or more”, making it difficult to tell if that level of education would consistently rate involvement level a nine out of ten. Although, from the data collected, we can see that parents tended to be more involved with their children if they received some high school or a graduate degree or more. Overall the data seems pretty consistent with no major outliers.

Conclusion

Family Fun Time Activities have proven to increase and facilitate family involvement. There were positive responses from all respondents as shown in table 1. The results support the ideas from Tazouti and Jarlegan (2019), and Anthonyraj and Sasikala (2019) that state, when children are encouraged they do better. Positive results and attitudes from the respondents equal higher ratings on survey responses, which means the child and family both enjoyed the activities and remained involved. As for the ideas presented by Marcon (1999) and Keller, et al. (2021), which found that some parents do not have as much time to be as involved with their children because of their jobs, schooling etc, was not supported with the data found. The data collected is not completely reliable because there were a limited number of responses in each category. For the data we do have though, it showed that parents with a graduate degree or higher and those who completed some high school tend to rate their level of involvement higher than other educational levels. This goes against some of the literature previously found but agrees with my hypothesis.

Many of the responses included positive feedback and showed care for their children, which is important and in some cases even showed that their home environment is good. Having a good home environment has been found to play a key role in family involvement (Anthonyraj

& Sasikala, 2019). These studies as well as others have paved the way and shed light on the importance of family involvement. It is crucial for parents or guardians to take initiative and make time to support and spend time with their children not only to better themselves and their relationship but also to set up their children for success in the future.

Citations:

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