

**How Family Enjoyment is Affected by Family Involvement**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the affect family involvement has on the family enjoyment of families from Head Start and Andy Taylor Center through Family Fun Time activities. After families completed Family Fun Time activities, researchers sent home surveys to 100 families. These surveys consisted of demographic questions, qualitative response questions and quantitative response questions. From the 100 surveys we sent out, we got a response rate of 16.1% response rate. This study was a mixed-methods study with non-randomized participants. The qualitative responses consisted of open-ended questions regarding the “family fun time” activities. The quantitative responses consisted of close-ended questions and questions that consisted of a scale from one to ten giving the family an opportunity to rate their response numerically. The results were consistent with previous studies resulting that family involvement had a positive impact upon family enjoyment.

### **Introduction**

This paper will examine the importance family involvement has on family enjoyment. This study focuses on how activities researcher’s created impacted family involvement and family enjoyment. This research will examine how families from all different backgrounds; ethnic, socio-economic status, ages, income, and much more were affected by the activities and how the activities affected their family involvement.

For this study, researchers hypothesized that family enjoyment would increase, as family involvement would increase. In previous studies, scholars have found that that is true (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). It has been argued that family involvement contributes to multiple factors, including that is has a major impact on success of the child (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan,

2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Given these findings, researchers predicted that our responses would reflect the same outcome. Children of all different backgrounds would have different responses to parental involvement, but would consistently be positive, as we have predicted. In addition to parental involvement, studies have concluded that positive reinforcement, instead of corporal punishment and negative reinforcement has a strong positive impact on children (Gershoff, et al., 2016; Pratt, et al., 2015). Through this study, we examine how the activities helped children learn different emotions, learned different ways of communication, learned shapes and colors, as well as learning critical thinking skills. We hypothesize that family involvement will have a strong positive impact on the enjoyment families face throughout the “family fun time” activities.

### **Literature Review**

Epstein’s (1995) framework of the six types of involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. Although they didn’t have much mention of Epstein’s framework, other scholars confirmed that there are multiple different ways of family involvement and that they all have a positive impact on the child and the future for the child (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). These types of involvement; whether it be parental figures playing with their children, parental figures helping their children with homework, can help families develop a good source of communication with their children after school in their at-home environments, help families develop a good support system for their children in their home settings, organize parent help and support system programs through the school, provide information to parents on how to help students with their homework and other academic measures at home, involve parents in school decisions by allowing them to be leaders

and representatives, and lastly strengthen the community and school relationship with programs and development (Epstein, 1991). Parent involvement is a key aspect in the children's future and academic growth because without its children will struggle and children will be less successful in their future.

When looking at family involvement, a huge aspect that has been shown to contribute to involvement is the socio-economic status of the family. A study conducted by Miller et al. (2020) investigated to see if a father's involvement could be linked to socio-economic disparities for the outcome of the children. This study, with 12,050 children's participants, concluded that if you increase the different types of parent involvement, specifically for fathers, it may narrow the gaps in a child's academic succession between low and high socioeconomic status (Miller, et al., 2020). Another study confirmed these findings that socioeconomic status has an impact (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Does positive family involvement enhance the development of a child? In a study conducted by Ming-Te Wang and Salam Sheikh-Khalil (2014), they review whether or not a parental involvement is a factor in the developmental processes of the youth. The aims of their study were to see if there was a substantial role of the different types of parent involvement having an impact on outcomes for students and if it varies from different races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic factors (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The outcomes of this study resulted in seeing differences in academic success for children with parent involvement being a huge factor. Multiple sources argue that students that had a stronger parental involved led to higher achievement and success for their future (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). A study by Tan (2019) concluded that having strong involvement in your child's academic and home settings, led to a stronger chance of

success, multiple other scholars agree that having a positive home environment and having a strong involvement with your child has a strong impact on their future endeavors (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Motivation and words of encouragement are always a good thing and a huge step in the right direction. Positive reinforcement leads to greater success in a child's future, therefore, giving encouragement and motivation leads to children doing better for themselves and working harder to achieve higher goals (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Another study on how mechanisms of the Head Start program impact children talks about the changes in the way parents spank and read with their children (Gershoff, et al., 2016). As many people may know, spanking is a very common parenting practice in the United States. This program, Head Start, does not permit spanking of any kind, and instead engage in positive ways of guidance for the children (Gershoff, et al., 2016). Reading to their children is a very common practice used amongst parents. Head Start has parents engage in reading to their children to increase the number of words the children may learn and the new literacy skills that are developed by children from parents reading to them (Gershoff, et al., 2016). Parental figures reading to their children enhances positive parent involvement, as it is positive interaction and communication within the parents and the children, which was confirmed by several other sources (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In another study on the Head Start program evaluates children living in non-parental care (Pratt, et al., 2015). This study talks about the same implications that reading with children and using other ways of guidance rather spanking creates positive endeavors for

children living in non-parental care as well, which was confirmed by another source (Gershoff, et al., 2016; Pratt, et al., 2015).

As noted above, parental involvement is an essential part of a child's development and their success. Children that receive the support and motivation from their parents are more likely to succeed than children that do not get those positive aspects. Children learn a lot from how they are raised and the involvement that their parents gave them when they were younger. That impacts the success that they will likely have in the future and will gain them determination and hard-working skills for their futures.

## **Data and Methods**

### **Instrument**

A survey questionnaire was created by the 50 members of the Social Research and Program Evaluation team at Longwood University. The survey asked both open and close ended questions. Items on the survey were designed to evaluate SMART objective of the five activities that were completed the previous week by Head Start and Andy Taylor Center families. Items were included that also addressed demographic information, enjoyment of activities, family involvement, and completion of activities. Hard copies of the questionnaire were delivered to Head Start and the Andy Taylor Center.

### **Sample**

The non-probability sample for this study was based on 100 children (ages three to five). Seventy-nine children attend Head Start in three counties. Head Start is a federal subsidized preschool for families with economic need. Twenty-one children attend the Andy Taylor Center which is located on a college campus, and families apply and pay for their children to attend. Attached to the questionnaire was a children's book to incentivize families to return the survey.

Guardians of the children were asked to complete the survey and return it to the preschool the next day. Teachers sent a reminder home with children to return any outstanding questionnaires. This resulted in 16 questionnaires being returned. Overall, there was a 16.1 % response rate.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Quantitative analysis of the returned surveys was based on the closed-ended questions. For this study the dependent variable is family involvement. The item from the questionnaire that was used to operationalize this was how involved was your family throughout the activity. The answer choices for this item were a scale from 0-10, 0 being none at all, 10 being very involved. For this study the independent variable is family enjoyment during the activity. The item from the questionnaire that was used to operationalize this was how much did your family enjoy this activity. The answer choices for this item were a scale from 0-10, 0 being no enjoyment at all, 10 being highly enjoyed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze these variables.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative analysis of the returned surveys was based on open-ended questions. The open-ended questions on the survey were, “What did your family enjoy most about these activities? Why?”, “What did your child learn from these activities?”, and “What recommendations would you suggest to make these activities better?”. To answer the research question, “How will family fun time activities influence family involvement?”, inductive open coding was used to determine reoccurring themes in the respondent’s responses.

## **Findings**

### **Quantitative Findings**

The dependent variable for this study is family involvement. It is coded by 0-10. Based on 16 responses, the mean for this variable is 8. The mean of 8 is high; however, the lack of

responses given has shown low significance. The standard deviation for this sample is 2.35. The independent variable for this study is family enjoyment. It is coded by 0-10. The mean for this sample is 8.14. The mean of 8.14 is high; however, the lack of responses given has shown low significance. The standard deviation for this sample is 2.57. The correlation between the independent and dependent variable is 0.68, which means that as the parent involvement of the families goes up, the amount of enjoyment of the activities goes up.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Throughout this study, there have been three prominent themes that stuck out from the responses on the surveys we received. These themes include involvement, education/learning, and positive feedback. There are 9 out of 16 surveys that contained words spoken of involvement within the activities. Respondent 15 said “Spending time together doing something educational is always fun.”. This statement regarding involvement showed that spending time together and everyone being involved in the activity was enjoyable for this respondent. Respondent 1 said “A free convenient activity to do as a family.”. This statement put an emphasis on involvement and how it was nice to have something that was convenient to do as a family. Respondent 4 said “The talks, spending time together, learning.”. This statement shows that this respondent found involvement within the family throughout these activities.

Another prominent theme that stuck out in responses from this study would be education/learning. There are 15 of the 16 surveys that included words relating to some type of learning aspect. Respondent 5 said “It [the activities] can be a learning skill but fun for the kids.”. This statement puts an emphasis on how the activities were educational, but fun at the same time according to the respondent. Respondent 7 said “My child learned how to be creative.”. This statement showed that the respondent noticed that the child learned the skill of



creativity throughout the activities. Respondent 13 said “There were some of the movements such as zigzag that my child did not know!”. This statement showed that the respondent noticed that the child learned new ways of moving and movements through participating in these activities.

The last prominent theme that stood out throughout the responses of the received surveys was positive feedback. There were 15 out of 16 surveys that contained positive feedback about the activities. In response to the question asking about what recommendations the respondent had to offer about the activities, respondent 11 said “None. Well planned out.”. This statement stood out because it showed how clear we were and how the activities were well organized and easy to figure out. Respondent 13 said “Materials provided and the variety of activities.”. This statement showed that the respondent liked the fact that there was lots of material provided and that they enjoyed the fact that there were multiple different types of activities. Respondent 14 said “I think everything is suitable.”. This statement showed that the respondent felt as though the activities were appropriate and fitting for the age range given.

### **Conclusion**

The results show that parent involvement had a huge impact on family enjoyment. Our results greatly support our hypothesis that family involvement has a significant impact on the enjoyment in which families face while participating in the “family fun time” activities. We have also found that children learned strong critical thinking skills, shapes and colors, emotions, and different ways of communication through this study. Throughout this study, we have found that children had significant enjoyment while participating in the “family fun time” activities. In addition, not only did the children find enjoyment out of these “family fun time activities”, but the family as a whole experienced the same. Previous studies found that family involvement has

a strong impact on the child's success and future (Epstein, 1995; Gershoff, et al., 2016; Miller, et al., 2020; Tan, 2019; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). From this study, we concluded that no matter what background a child was brought up in, family involvement with the child had a significant impact on the child's enjoyment and their success for their future endeavors. Overall, the results of this study confirmed other scholars in resulting that family involvement has a significant impact on family enjoyment and success of the child's future. Although we had a small response rate, we gained strong empirical evidence supporting our hypothesis.

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