

The Importance of Quality Family Time on Child Development

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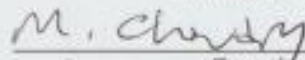
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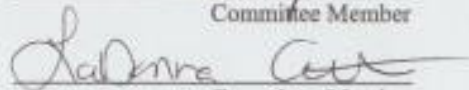
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Abstract

Minimal research has been done to date on how family time and children's activities impact a child's development. The amount of quality time that families spend together has decreased in recent years and children have fallen behind in different developmental areas. This idea prompts the question if there is a correlation between how children spend their time and the child's developmental state.

A longitudinal study uncovered that how a mother spends time impacts her child's behavior and academics. This study found a positive link between maternal education levels and the child's academic success as well as increased time spent with the mother, the child displayed less "delinquent behaviors" (Milkie et al., 2015).

Another study aimed to discover how COVID-19 impacted a child's behavior, speech and language. This study found that children with disadvantaged backgrounds fell behind on their social skills (Ofsted, 2020). The results displayed that about ¼ of the participants thought that these areas had improved with families spending more time talking and reading together. Hofferth & Sandberg (2001) reported on how family factors impacted the child's behaviors and cognitive abilities. The results indicated that child's activities as well as demographics played a role in family activities which influenced the child's development.

This correlational study aims to further investigate how family time may impact a child's development. The online survey allowed participants to answer questions about demographics, how the child spent time, how parents spent time with their child, and the child's behavior and academic abilities.

Findings suggest that how a child spends their time, impacts their behavior and academic achievements. Race, parental education, time spent eating, reading for pleasure, and family time all had impacted the child's behavior or their academic abilities. Some of these findings have consistencies with past research to suggest that family time is important for a child. For example, children who read for pleasure scored higher on achievement tests. Results also suggest that the amount of time spent engaged in family activities decreased behavioral issues in the child.

With the limited number of participants in the current study, future research should aim to expand their number of participants. Interviewing participants may also result in consistent interpretation of all survey questions. In addition, future researchers may analyze the activities studied to determine if new activities should be addressed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction and Background of the Problem

Child development is a relatively new topic, only about 150 years old, but it is crucial in understanding how children grow and function. Socialization is one of the key components to children's development. Social skills are how children interact with one another, offering a way to express themselves and communicate with others (Ivy Rehab Network, 2022). These social skills are important for children to “form positive relationships, have conversations, develop body language, cooperate, share, and play together,” (Ivy Rehab Network, para. 4). Each aspect of a child’s socialization also has an impact on their “mental capacity, cognitive abilities, and overall mental health,” (Ivy Rehab Network, para. 5). A study was conducted to look at the impact COVID-19 had on different areas of child development. Results showed 53% of children had “fallen behind” in their social and emotional development since October of 2020 (Ofsted, 2020). The way that a child socializes can have great impacts, whether positive or negative, throughout their lifetime.

Child development may look at the behaviors of a child. Behavior is a “response” to the world around them, whether that is intentional or unintentional (Berk, 2012). There are different types of behavior, one important one being prosocial behavior. A prosocial behavior is a “voluntary behavior intended to benefit another” (Eisenberg et al., 2010, p. 146). This behavior looks at how the individual uses “kindness, compassion, and helping” others (Hasenfratz & Knafo, 2015). Many benefits come to those who do the helping as well as receive the helping. The behavior is linked to “greater psychological well-being, better social relationships, and better physical health,” (Baumsteiger, 2019, para. 3). As children are greatly influenced by those near

them, parents and family lay the foundation for teaching children the positive ways to engage in prosocial behaviors.

Speech and language are also large components of development. In order for someone to truly understand what is happening in the world around them, they need certain communication skills. The skills begin right when a child enters the world, communicating through cries, eventually maturing those cries into words. Speech and language are vital to collaborate with others and grow relationships, whether through expressing thoughts and feelings or having conversations (Sword, 2021). Communication and language skills have taken a hit in the last three years, with 29% of children falling behind (Ofsted, 2022). Families and peers are crucial components in improving language skills in children (Sword).

Today in the United States, families with school-aged children spend an average of only 37 minutes of quality time together during the typical weekday and 2 hours and 40 minutes during a typical day on the weekend (Paul, 2018). $\frac{2}{3}$ of the families described long work hours as a main contributing factor for limited time, followed by household chores and the hectic schedule for their kids (Paul). Another study conducted in the UK researched families of school-aged kids, comparing family time and the use of electronics in 2000 to 2015. Surprisingly, it was found that families spent nearly 30 minutes more a day in the same location than those 15 years prior (University of Oxford, 2019). This time, however, was heavily spent as “alone-together time”, meaning the families were near each other, but focused on their own individual devices (University of Oxford, 2019). Families spent 40 more minutes of alone-together time than before, causing some to feel as though the “quality of family relationships is under threat,” (University of Oxford, 2019). These results overall found that families may be present together

more often than before, but are not engaging with one another, leaving the quality of their relationships potentially feeling attacked (University of Oxford, 2019).

According to Thatcher (2020), quality family time has many health benefits that can expand across a lifetime. His findings show 10 key areas that are improved upon, beginning with mental health. Family time reduces mental illnesses (such as depression and anxiety), the risk of behavioral problems (such as violence), and stress (Thatcher). Children who experience quality family time learn important skills. Communication and problem solving fostered by families help the child succeed academically (Thatcher). Quality family time also helps a child feel a sense of purpose, loved, and valued, leading to increased self-confidence (Thatcher). During time together, parents display skills that promote positive interactions between siblings (Thatcher). Physical health is also promoted through family activities and meals (Thatcher). Finally, a child's lifespan can increase by up to 50% due to the positive time they spend with their family (Thatcher). According to Thatcher (2020), promoting these areas within a relationship between family members sets the foundation for meaningful life.

Statement of the Problem

Children's development is a key component in beginning to understand how children function. With over 50% of children falling behind in social and emotional areas in the last few years, it is vital to investigate further what may have significant impacts on these numbers. Quality family time is very important for a seemingly endless amount of reasons, especially those previously mentioned. As the quality of time spent together between family members has decreased, it prompts the idea of whether there is a correlation between how children spend their time and the child's developmental state.

This study will look at how families spend their time together plays a role in their children's development. By surveying the parents of children, a new lens may be opened on how valuable and meaningful interactions between family members can have a positive effect on a child's development. The goal of this study is to better understand which types of family activities are the most beneficial, equally as important to understand which may be damaging.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

By examining how children spend their time with their family, we are better able to comprehend the importance that families have on each individual child. Each activity can have a significant impact on the child's development. Understanding what activities have the biggest impact on children can provide new understandings for parents. It can help parents plan their schedules to best promote positive development and outcomes for their children. It is also crucial to understand the different areas of child development and how each of those effect the child. By bringing light to these impacts, we are better able to understand just how important families time together is.

Maternal Time on Behavior, Emotion, and Academics

In a longitudinal study, Milkie and colleagues (2015) looked at how mothers' spent time with their children, diving into behavior, emotion, and academic aspects. Interviews were conducted approximately five years apart to compare how mothers impacted their children. A small link was found between the amount of time a mother spent with her children and a decrease in "delinquent behaviors" (Milkie et al.). The children's risky behaviors were thought to be decreased when the amount of time spent with their mother increased for reasons such as, "blocking opportunities, encouraging more prosocial thinking and actions during their time together," as well as realizing there was the possibility of getting hurt themselves or dwindling their relationship and bond with their parent (Milkie et al., p. 368). The findings of this study also concluded that both economic and social resources played a significant role in the outcomes, putting forth the idea that these assets are just as important as time spent with the parents (Milkie et al.). Results showed a positive link between the child's academic success and the mother's education (Milkie et al.). Although no significant relationship was found between time spent

with their mother and behavioral and/ or emotional problems, there was a connection between these problems and households consisting of unmarried or non-biological parents (Milkie et al.). Behavioral problems increased in households composed of stepfamilies (Milkie et al.). Emotional problems also increased for children who were “living in single-mother households,” (Milkie et al., p. 362). This study looked at how mother’s time impacted children, but there is not much known about how father’s time impacts the child’s development.

COVID-19’s Impact on Social and Emotional Skills

Socialization allows for children to learn through their own experiences. As a young child, they begin to develop social skills and learn about the world around them through socialization (Yellow Brick road, 2018). Social development also allows the child to gain individuality and communication skills, prompting relationships (Canizares, 2018). Communication begins at home with family members with adults modeling effective communication with their children (Canizares).

Eight months after the start of COVID-19, Ofsted (2020) published a study to bring awareness to the impact the national lockdown had on children. Care providers participated in phone interviews to compare children who continued attending their current setting, those who were at home with parents supporting them and spending time with them, and finally, those at home with minimal time spent with their parents (Ofsted). Most care providers expressed concerns about development of children that had disadvantaged backgrounds, such as poverty (Ofsted). Some of these children who stayed home did not have access to things they typically did in their usual setting, such as toys or outdoor time (Ofsted). This led to the children not progressing as expected in social areas (Ofsted). The interviews concluded that social

development suffered because many of the children returned to their specific setting “more anxious” and “struggled when they first returned” (Ofsted).

Consideration of Behavior on Child Development

Prosocial behaviors are done with the purpose of benefiting another person (Eisenberg et al., 2010). When considering prosocial behaviors, it is necessary to analyze areas such as “empathy, sympathy, and personal distress,” as well as aggressive or antisocial behaviors (Eisenberg et al., p. 169). The motivation behind the behavior may also tell more of a story, such as if it is egoistic, practical, or for moral values (Eisenberg et al.). For a child, prosocial behavior may look like sharing toys or food with friends, helping someone with school, comforting another (Hasenfratz & Knafo, 2015).

The styles and techniques that a parent uses structures a child’s prosocial behavior (Hasenfratz & Knafo). As children tend to accept their parents as role models, they learn what types of social behaviors are considered acceptable, thus fostering them as their own (Hasenfratz & Knafo). Demographics are necessary to consider for how someone behaves as well. For instance, certain cultures value independence while others value control in their children (Hasenfratz & Knafo).

COVID-19’s Impact on Speech and Language Development

Speech and language are considerably important aspects of child development. Speech and language are required components of communication. These forms of communication begin from birth and carry with individuals throughout their lives. Children and adults alike need these areas of communication to be capable of growing relationships, expressing thoughts and feelings, and conversing with others (Sword, 2021).

In the same research discussed regarding how COVID-19 impacted children's social and emotional skills, this research also addressed speech and language development in the children. One interview question asked care providers to name an area that they believe had improved (Ofsted, 2020). About ¼ of the care providers stated communication and language had improved, stating that “parents who were able to spend more time talking to and reading with their children had had a positive impact on children's communication and language skills,” (Ofsted, p. 6). The care providers noticed children became more involved with their parents during daily routines, such as meals or family walks (Ofsted). The increased family time potentially alludes to increased communication skills. It is important to note that about ¼ of providers also believed that communication skills had taken a hit in the recent years, potentially due to students unable to interact with peers (Ofsted).

How American Children Spent Their Time

Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) reported on how children spent their time in 1997. Households with children under the age of 13 years old kept time diaries for a week to uncover the amount of hours and minutes the children spent participating in certain activities (Hofferth & Sandberg). Parents were asked to keep a time diary for a 24-hour period about the flow of activities, being randomly assigned to one weekday and one weekend day. The time was tracked down to the minute for each specific activity, emphasizing the primary activity, but noting if there was a secondary activity happening congruently. To assess the children, they completed parts of a standardized test for cognitive and achievement scores, as well as being measured on the Behavioral Problem Index to test socioemotional status. Activities tracked were organized into 18 groups and then further categorized as “school and child care time, unstructured versus structured activities, out-of-school learning, and family time,” (Hofferth & Sandberg, p. 302).

These activities were then coded to determine the importance of each type of activity. In doing so, researchers were interested to determine if and how the activities impacted the child's "achievement and behavior," (Hofferth & Sandberg, p. 305).

Results of this study showed that nearly 70% of children's time was spent doing necessary activities such as "personal care, eating, sleeping, and school," (Hofferth & Sandberg, p. 301). The specific number of hours spent doing each activity varied by age group, such as increased amount of time sleeping but less time spent in school for younger children and decreased amount of time spent sleeping but more time in school for older children. The remaining 30% of children's time was spent largely in free play or watching television, then participating in structured activities, and minimal time spent reading or studying, creating art, or other passive activities (Hofferth & Sandberg).

Researchers were interested in how children's time may be associated with cognitive and behavioral development. They found significance in numerous areas "primarily due to family factors affecting how children's time is spent," as well as a few significances associated with demographics (Hofferth & Sandberg, p. 306). For instance, Hispanic children spent the most time participating in household work, followed by White children, and then Black and Asian children. Higher parental education was also associated with an increased time doing household work. Meal times also were influenced by demographics. Families with working mothers, Black and Hispanic families, and families with older parents all spent more time eating (Hofferth & Sandberg).

An average of 14 ½ hours a week was spent with family time as the primary activity (Hofferth & Sandberg). This time was typically spent eating meals together, largely engaged in conversation. The other portion of family time was spent performing household chores. Children

who spent more time reading for pleasure scored higher on achievement tests, television and studying time did not significantly impact these scores. Engaging in active recreation also leads to higher scores on achievement tests. Family time also affected cognitive and behavioral aspects for the children. Increased time spent eating meals as a family was associated with higher cognitive scores. It was also linked to reduced distressed behaviors and aggressive behaviors, potentially because families averaged 45 minutes of conversation discussing their day. Findings showed a decrease in behavior problems among children who slept more. Overall, the key finding to this study was the significant importance that being at home “eating, sleeping, and reading,” has on both achievements and behavioral aspects of the children (Hofferth & Sandberg, p. 307).

Findings set forth by Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) lay the groundwork for continued research. These findings are over 25 years old, but provide incredible insight for where to resume exploration. Many of their variables are still relevant today, with a few minor critiques needed. With seemingly endless possibilities for how children’s development is impacted, the researchers were able to narrow down important aspects.

How Mothers and Fathers Spend Their Time

Parker and Wang (2013) reported on how the time that mothers and fathers spend participating in work has evened out in the 50 years between the 1960’s and 2011. Fathers have decreased the number of hours spent doing paid working by about 5 hours per week, averaging 37 hours per week in paid work in 2011. Mothers have increased their number of paid work hours by 13 hours, averaging 21 hours per week in 2011. Fathers have increased their weekly hours of housework by 6 hours per week, totaling approximately 10 hours per week. Mothers have decreased their hours of housework by nearly 14 hours, spending around 18 hours per week

engaged in housework. Both fathers and mothers have increased the hours they spend with their children, fathers typically spend roughly 7 hours in child care tasks while mothers spend roughly 13 hours weekly. Based on these numbers, mothers generally spend nearly “twice as much time with their children” compared to the father (Parker & Wang, 2011, p. 28).

This study will explore and dive into how families of young children spend time together. The study will examine the different types of activities that the families engage in together or individually. It will investigate how these activities impact, whether positively or negatively, a child’s development. By researching potential correlations, we will gain a better understanding of beneficial ways parents and children interact with each other.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Correlational Research

The purpose of this correlational study is to investigate the effects of family time on a child's development. Chiang, Jhangiani, and Price (2015) define what correlational research is as well as the benefits of selecting this type of research method. Authors examined this nonexperimental design that focuses on evaluating the "statistical relationships" between variables (p. 142). Correlational research is conducted for two reasons, either the researcher does not "believe that the statistical relationship is a causal one" or the researcher believes there is a causal relationship, but the variables are unable to be manipulated for reasons such as being "impossible, impractical, or unethical" (Chiang et al., 2015, p. 142). Continuing on, it is discussed that this type of research can be measured anywhere or anytime, as long as variables are not manipulated.

Correlational research can be approached in three main ways, naturalistic observation, archival data, and survey method (Chiang et al., 2015). It is stated that naturalistic observation studies people in a natural environment such as at a store or playground. These observations are geared towards remaining completely anonymous, however it raises some questions of ethicality. It is debated how privacy may be violated as people still have "a reasonable expectation" for their privacy that may be infringed upon (p. 144). Another issue with naturalistic observation is how sampling occurs, which is needing to consider all conditions in which observations are made and how those observations are measured.

The next type of approach is archival data. This research has already "been collected for some other purpose" (Chiang et al., p. 146). Issues also arise with this type of research as

searching for content requires specific wording and needing all necessary aspects to appear in a specific data set. The data then is able to be analyzed in a multitude of ways (Chiang et al.).

The survey method is the third type of research. The two main important aspects with the survey method are that responses are self-reporting and sampling (Chiang et al.). Participants are required to answer questions about their own “thoughts, feelings, and behaviors,” (p. 181). Sampling allows for a large sample of the population to be randomly assessed. Another benefit of the survey method is that surveys can be any length and completed anywhere.

The research is broken down again into different sampling categories, probability or nonprobability (Chiang et al., 2015). Probability sampling happens when “researchers can specify the probability that each member of the population will be selected” (p. 193). Nonprobability sampling occurs when this is not possible, instead using convenience sampling which studies individuals who are “nearby and willing to participate” (p. 193).

In this study, participants were all parents with a child between the ages of 6 and 12 years old. The primary goal of this study was to determine if a correlation existed between how families spend time together and the child’s development, sharing personal data about family time as well as typical behaviors of the child. The survey method from correlational research was chosen to understand the potential impact that parents and families have on children.

Participants in this study were asked to complete the survey to disclose information about activities they participated in together as well as the child’s behaviors and academic achievements. The participants were recruited voluntarily through numerous Facebook groups. Participants can leave the survey at any time for any reason.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through social media posts on Facebook. The survey was posted in four specific groups, two mom groups, one neighborhood group, and two city wide groups. All of these Facebook groups targeted the city of Edmond in Oklahoma and the city of Rochester in Minnesota. The sizable cities are intended to cover a large variety of participants with different backgrounds. Participation in the study was voluntary and each could opt out at any time. The main goal is to gain responses from 25 parents to share their data about their family.

Upon beginning the survey, participants was informed that the survey would remain anonymous and are provided the email address of the researcher if any questions or concerns were to arise. They were also informed that the survey would take approximately ten minutes to complete. Participants were able to end the survey any time they wish.

Participants

Eight parents with children between the ages of 6-12 years old participated in this survey. As the survey is posted in Edmond, Oklahoma specific Facebook groups, it is assumed that all parents live in or near Edmond. The survey was also posted in a Rochester, Minnesota Facebook group, assuming some participants may live in or near Rochester as well. Six the participants were women and two were men. More information regarding demographics about participants will be further discussed in Chapter 4: Findings.

Research Questions

Five main areas were examined: demographics, how children spend their time, child behavior, child achievements, and how parents spend time with their children. Many questions

were based off of Hofferth & Sandberg's (2001) research discussed in Chapter 2. Some example questions were the main focus include the following:

On average, how many hours does the child spend in different activities, such as school or household chores?

How often does the child engage in specific behaviors, such as lying or feeling anxious?

How many hours do the mother and father spend engaged in what types of activities with the child?

Basic Demographics

Age

Gender

Male

Female

Third Gender/ Non-binary

Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

Annual household income

Household status

Double income

Single income

Single income with at-home dad

Single income with at-home mom

Other

Prefer not to say

Highest level of education completed

Type of family

Nuclear (biological parents)

Step family

Single-parent family

Extended family

How many children live in your home?

Age and gender of each child

How children spend time

Consider one child between the ages of 3-12 years old, how old is that child?

How many hours on an average week day does the child spend engaged in the specific activities listed? (Listed in Table 1.)

How many hours on an average weekend day does the child spend engaged in the specific activities listed? (Listed in Table 1.)

Child's behavior

How often does the child engage in the specific behaviors listed? (Listed in Table 2.)

Child's achievements

How often would the child be able to perform tasks listed? (Listed in Table 3.)

Which most accurately represents the child's grades in school?

Parent time

How many hours per week does the mother spend working?

How many hours per week does the mother spend doing child care tasks

How many hours per week does the mother spend doing household chores?

How many hours per week does the father spend working?

How many hours per week does the father spend doing child care tasks?

How many hours per week does the father spend doing household chores?

How many hours per week does your family spend in family time/ participating in family activities?

What types of activities does the mother typically engage in with the child? (Listed in Table 4.)

What types of activities does the father typically engage in with the child? (Listed in Table 4.)

Data Analysis

The survey was conducted via Qualtrics. Responses were recorded and analyzed to determine a potential correlation between family time and child development. Based on the correlational research and survey method, each variable will be able to be compared to other necessary variables.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this thesis study was to examine how the way a child spends their time may impact their development. It is necessary to understand which types of activities a child engages in to understand how it affects other areas of their life. By having parents fill out surveys about their child's activity habits, common themes began to emerge which will be discussed within this chapter. Participants reported in a variety of areas including demographics, how many hours their child engages in different activities, how frequent the child engages in certain behaviors, how the child would do in different achievement tasks, how parents spent time in different areas of life, how much time families spend together, and how COVID-19 has impacted their family.

Demographics of Participants

The participants in this study were parents that had a child between the ages of 6 and 12 years old. There were two male participants and six female participants with ages ranging between 26 to 55 years old. One male participant and one female participant were Hispanic with the other six participants being White. Participants also varied between a single-income (1 participant), double-income (5 participants), or single-income with a stay-at-home-mom (2 participants). The number of children in a home ranged between one and four children. The highest level of education was a high school diploma for one participant, Bachelor's Degree for six participants, and a Master's Degree for one participant. Household incomes ranged between \$50,000 up to \$200,000 per year. 100% of participants lived in a nuclear household with both biological parents. Participants were asked to answer the survey questions about one of their children, four participants answered about their 6-year-old, two participants answered about their

7-year-old, one participant answered about their 8-year-old, and one participant answered about their 11-year-old.

As discussed in Chapter Two, each demographic question analyzed has played an important role in the development of the child. The specific aspects of how each of them impacts the families in the current survey will be further discussed in the following sections.

Hours Spent in Activities

Participants were asked how much time their child spend in specific activities, differentiating between a weekday and a weekend day. Each activity is outlined in Table 1. Participants rounded the time children spent in each activity to the nearest half hour and were required to have each day, weekday or weekend day, add up to a 24-hour period to ensure the entire day was accounted for.

During a typical weekday, children spent most of their time sleeping. The average child spent the most time sleeping, averaging 8 hours and 52 minutes across children. The amount of sleep that each child acquired ranged between 6 hours to 11 hours on a typical week night. The next activity children spent most time in was school and/ or child care, averaging 6 hours and 52 minutes a day. This activity also had a range, between 5 hours and 8 hours. Children typically averaged 1 hour and 30 minutes a day eating. An average of 1 hour was spent outdoors, engaged in activities such as gardening, camping, or hiking. Children spent about 56 minutes, just under an hour, per day playing. Playing was categorized with activities including video games, internet usage, board games, and toys. The playing category included a wide range amongst participants. One participant reported their child had 0 minutes a day while another participant reported an average of 3 hours and 30 minutes a day. Only one family attended church related events during the week for an average of 1 hour. Across participants, parents reported on average their children

engaging less than an hour a day in each of the following categories: sports, hobbies, art activities, watching TV, reading for pleasure, household conversations, household work, personal care, studying, and in clubs or organizations. No child spent any time doing market work, such as babysitting or a paper route.

Participants reported some similarities and differences with how their child spent time on the weekend compared to a weekday. Children spent the same amount of time sleeping and playing sports on a weekend day as they do on a weekday. No children spent time in school or child care during the weekend so the nearly 7 hours spent there during the weekday was spent on other activities. Similarly, children did not spend any time doing market work.

Three families attended church on the weekends for between 1-2 hours which was an increase from the average amount of time spent attending during the week. Children spent nearly triple the amount of time outdoors (3.13 hours), doing hobbies (1.13 hours), and watching TV (1.88 hours) on the weekend compared to a weekday. Other areas where children spent more time on the weekend were doing art, clubs and organizations, and personal care, about 3 more minutes per each activity among all children. Children engaged in household conversations and household work each for 19 minutes more on a weekend. Participants reported that children spent about 23 more minutes eating on the weekend and nearly 50 more minutes playing.

There were two activities that children spent less time on during the weekend. Children averaged 4 minutes less reading for pleasure compared to an average weekday. They also averaged 3 minutes less studying during a weekend day.

Child's Behaviors

Participants were asked to answer questions about how often their child engages in certain types of behaviors. Each behavior is outlined in Table 2. Participants could select “often”,

“sometimes”, or “never” as their answer. All answers in this section are intended to be “never”. Answers are displayed in Chart 1.

Out of the 25 behavior questions asked, 3 results had “never” for all participants. Those questions included how often their child seems confused or in a fog, has trouble getting along with other children, and hangs around with kids who get into trouble.

Seven out of the eight participants responded “never” to the question asking if their child feels or complains that no one loves them, however one responded “sometimes”. The same participant responded “sometimes” when asked if their child is often withdrawn or does not get involved with others, the remaining responded with “never” for the same question. A different participant was the only to respond with “sometimes” when asked if their child feels that others are out to get them.

The question that yielded the least amount of “never” responses asked participants about the frequency that the child cheats or tells lies. 75% of participants responded with “sometimes”. Another included how often the child argued too much, with 5 responses including the choice “sometimes”, 1 reported “often”, and 2 responses of “never”. A final question that only resulted in 2 “never” responses asked how often the child had difficulty concentrating/ paying attention. 1 participant indicated “often” while the remaining responded with “sometimes”. The next questions with the fewest “never” responses asked how frequently the child has sudden changes in mood or feelings as well as how frequently the child seemed restless, overly active, or couldn’t sit still. These also created a variety of responses with 3 participants reporting “never”, 1 reporting “often”, and the remaining reported “sometimes”. An additional question that resulted in 3 “never” responses and 5 “sometimes” responses asked how frequently the child was disobedient at home. All remaining questions had at least 50% of responses suggesting the child

never engaged in that specific behavior. The questions and number of responses are broken down by participant and displayed in Chart 1.

Achievement

The achievement area of the survey asked parents to report on how often their child would perform different achievement tasks. Participants had the choice to respond with “never”, “about half of the time”, or “always”.

Only one question showed a result of “never”. This question asked about the child’s ability to listen to a math problem and perform the appropriate calculation. This answer was from the parent of a 6-year-old child. 100% of responses indicated the child could “always” recognize individual letters, understand the concept of simple numbers, and write numbers. All but one participant indicated their child could “always” read words from a list, complete age appropriate numerical operations, and match a short phrase to the appropriate picture. The one participant who chose a different answer selected “about half of the time”. This was the same participant for two of the questions, and a second participant for the last question. The next question in the achievement area asked how often the child could appropriately fill in a missing word from a sentence. Four participants selected “always”, three participants selected “about half of the time”, and one did not respond. Finally, parents were asked to choose which selection most accurately represented their child’s grades. All selected between A’s and B’s for their child.

How Parents Spend Time

Parents involvement with their child was the next section on the survey. This area asked questions to understand how many hours per week the mother, the father, or another parent spent working, doing childcare tasks, and doing household chores. One participant indicated an older

brother living at home who contributed 24 hours per week working and 2 hours each of childcare tasks and household chores.

The first question looked into how mothers and fathers time was spent working. Mothers averaged 29 hours and 22 minutes per week working. However, three households indicated 0 hours of work for the mother. These three households listed themselves as single income with an at home mother or a single income household. The remaining five mothers listed hours working ranging between 40-60 hours per week. The average time working mothers spent a week at work was 47 hours. All participants indicated a working father. Fathers averaged 47 hours and 30 minutes working per week. The fathers listed hours working ranged between 40-60 hours per week. Three participants indicated both the mother and father working the same number of hours per week. Four participants listed more working hours for the father. One participant stated more working hours for the mother.

Next, the researcher asked how much time mothers and fathers each spent doing childcare tasks. Mothers averaged 26 hours and 25 minutes doing childcare tasks. One participant indicated that the mother of the household spent “every day all day” engaged in childcare tasks. This participants response was excluded from the average as no numerical response was given. The individual responses yielded a wide range, between 6 to 70 hours per week. These hours included at-home moms and working moms. Father’s averaged 11 hours per week doing childcare tasks. The same participant mentioned previously stated “all day every day (works from home)” for this question. As previously stated, this response was excluded due to no numerical response. For all except one participant, the mother’s spent more time engaged in childcare tasks than the father.

The final question asked how much time both parents spent doing household chores. Mother's averaged 9 hours per week on household chores. Father's averaged 6 hours and 52 minutes per week doing household chores. One participant reported the father spent more time and one participant reported that the mother and father spent equal time doing household chores. The remaining six all reported the mother doing more hours of household chores a week.

Participants were also asked to compare the types of activities that the mother, father, or another parent typically engaged in with the child. One participant, that was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, also indicated an older brother participating in clubs and organizations, playing, and household conversations with the child. The other seven participants only included activities that the mother and father engaged in with the child. All activities that participants could select from are listed in Table 1.

All mothers spent time with their child during the child's personal care and eating. All but one mother spent time watching TV with their child. 75% of mothers spent time doing household work, sports, outdoors, hobbies, and having household conversations with their child. Five mothers spent time playing with their child. 50% of mothers spent time studying, attending church, and visiting (e.g. youth clubs or organizations) with their child. Three mothers did art activities and read for pleasure with their child.

All but one father ate and spent time outdoors with their child. 75% of fathers played and watched TV with their child. Five fathers engaged in household conversations with their child. 50% of fathers engaged in personal care time, going to church, sports, and hobbies with their child. Three fathers did household work, visiting (youth clubs or organizations), and art activities with their child. 25% of fathers read for pleasure with their child. Only one father studied with their child.

Family Time

Researchers looked at how many hours per week each family spent engaged in family time or participating in family activities. The overall results suggested approximately 18 hours and 7 minutes per week in family time. Responses ranged from 7 hours per week up to 56 hours per week.

The Impact of COVID-19

A question about how COVID-19 was asked to understand if and how the pandemic may have impacted how a family spends time together. Three participants indicated that it had no change or impact on their family time. The other families all indicated an increase in family time. One participant said COVID-19 caused an “increased togetherness during the height of pandemic – the silver lining”. Two indicated they did “more stuff together” and spent “more time together”. The remaining two participants suggested that COVID-19 has encouraged them to do more “family-oriented” activities together and getting “outdoors” and “outside the home together” more than before.

Chapter Five: Discussion

It has become clear that family time and how a child spends the hours in their day has an impact on the child's development, specifically their behavior and achievements. The researcher has examined how some of the activities were connected with more desired behaviors or higher achievement scores. The behaviors and achievement scores were also examined against how parents spent their time with their children. The purpose of this study was to examine how children's time may impact other areas of their life, and understand what types of activities parents can promote in their household to encourage better behaviors and better achievement scores.

Eight participants with children between the ages of six and twelve years old participated in an online survey to provide information on how they and their spouse spend their time as well as their child's time, behavior, and achievements. Participants provided demographic information including their age, gender, race, income, education level, type of household income, type of family living in their house, and the number of children living in their house. Participants then answered questions about their children, starting with how many hours per weekday and weekend day their child spent engaged in specific activities, listed in Table 1. Questions then transitioned into how often the child engages in certain types of behaviors, listed in Table 2. The final questions about the child asked how well they may perform in specific achievement tests.

After the participants finished answering the questions about their children, they were taken to the next section of the survey which required them to answer how much time the mother and father spent working, doing childcare tasks, and doing household tasks. Participants were also required to select which activities the mother and father engaged in with the child. This

section also asked how many hours the family spent engaged in family time or family activities. Finally, the survey included how COVID-19 may have impacted their family time.

It is important to note that the survey questions may not have been interpreted the same between the participants. Achievement questions may have been interpreted differently based on the participants education level or the age of their child. Different questions required participants to consider time in hours per week or hours per day, which may have resulted in mixing up or answering the question about the wrong period of time. For instance, a stay-at-home mom answered a question about how many hours she spends doing childcare tasks. She reported 6 hours per week while another stay-at-home reported 70 hours per week. Parents may have also not reported completely accurate, whether or not that be intentional.

Childhood activities and family time can be correlated to other areas of life. The results of the survey indicate that parents have an influence in their child's life. Results may help support parents better understand which activities they can encourage for their children.

No children attended school or child care during the weekend so those hours were divided into different categories. Children spent slightly longer eating and engaged in household conversations during the weekend. Household conversations had a slight increase of about 20 more minutes on the weekend. This may be a result in parents typically working during the week and families spending more time as a whole on the weekend. A few areas showed significant increases in time spent doing them. Household chores, visiting, and hobbies all about doubled in the amount of time the child spent engaged in them. Again, weekends typically allow for more time to be spent at home so families are able to partake in these types of activities. Outdoor time and watching TV both tripled in hours on the weekend. This survey was conducted at the end of Spring when weather typically is getting nicer. This may be a contributing factor to families

spend more time outdoors on the weekend. Attending church was also a lot more frequent on the weekend. This may be due to the increased number of church services available to children and families on the weekend. Areas that showed no significant difference between the week and weekend included: personal care, sleep, studying, sports, art, and reading.

Comparing the Data

A large portion of the questions in this study are based on the original study conducted in 1997 by Hofferth and Sandberg (2001). The results of the original study are detailed in Chapter Two, however will be discussed and compared to the current study in this section. Hofferth and Sandberg found that children spent 70% of their time doing necessary activities. These included “personal care, eating, sleeping, and school,” (p. 301). The current results showed that children spent 75% of their time in these activities.

The original study also analyzed how race impacted children’s time. Six of the participants in this study are White and two participants are Hispanic. The original study indicated that Hispanic children spent more time doing household work than other races, with White children following. This finding is inconsistent with the current study as both Hispanic families had 0 hours spent doing household work, but four White children typically participated between 30-60 minutes a day. The original study also included that the children who spent more time doing household work who had parents with higher education, however the parent who reported the lowest level of education also reported that their child spent the most time doing household work when compared to the other responses.

Time spent eating was also analyzed in the original study. Hofferth and Sandberg reported that families with a working mother as well as families with older parents spent more time eating. In the current study, families with at-home mother’s averaged 1 hour and 40 minutes

eating a day. Families with a working mom typically spent 1 hour and 24 minutes a day eating. The oldest participant reported their child spending the least amount of time eating compared to all other responses. These results are inconsistent with the original data. Hispanic families were originally reported to spend more time eating, but the current study shows no significant difference between Hispanic and White families.

Five participants reported their child typically did not read for pleasure on an average day and three reported their child did read for pleasure. One estimated their child spent one hour per day reading, while the other two estimated about 30 minutes per weekday. The child who averaged one hour of reading per day, the highest of the responses, as well as one child who averaged 30 minutes per day were estimated to score the highest on the achievement tests. Results were consistent with Hofferth and Sandberg's results. The results were also consistent with television and studying having no significant impact on the scores.

Hofferth and Sandberg's study showed children displayed less behavioral issues when family time increased. One participant reported the highest average of 56 hours per week spent engaged in family time. When comparing behavior issues results, this participant reported the 2nd highest amount of behavioral issues. However, the parents that reported the 2nd and 3rd highest amount of time engaged in family time also reported the least amount of behavioral issues displayed by their child. The original study also found that an increased amount of sleep in children was correlated with a decrease in behavioral problems. The results of this study did not find consistencies in this area.

Another study conducted by Parker and Wang in 2013 analyzed how mothers and fathers spent their time working, doing housework, and caring for their children. More specific details of the study was also discussed in Chapter Two. The number of hours that mothers and fathers

spent working significantly increased in the current study, 10 more hours per week for fathers and 26 more hours per week for mothers. Fathers have decreased how much time they spend doing housework by approximately 3 hours. Mothers have also decreased the amount of time they spend doing housework by nearly half, approximately 9 hours per week. Mothers now spend an average of 26 hours and 25 minutes doing childcare tasks a week, more than double the results of the previous study. Fathers have also increased the amount of time they spend doing childcare tasks. They have increased by approximately 4 hours a week, averaging 11 hours per week in the current study.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, this survey study only focuses on parents with a child between six and twelve years old. The parents were required to open up and focus on how their family spends their time. This required parents to be vulnerable in sharing how long their child engages in different activities as well as consider how they, as parents, spend time with their children. Because of the length and thought process of the survey questions, the sample size was limited. The size of the sample is not large enough to be considered the reality across the entire population of parents with children this age.

Recruiting participants was also limited to parents who have access to a Facebook account or had the survey shared with them by someone who had access to the survey via the Facebook posts. Both cities that the Facebook groups were targeting were large, suburban cities. The sample was also limited to parents willing to take the time to complete the survey in its entirety.

Future Research

With a deeper understanding of how family time impacts a child's behavior and achievements, continued research and studies conducted to document the potential impacts would create even more data in the field. It would provide a large scope and better grasp of just how big of an impact a family can have. The researcher would have preferred to have a larger sample size that included a more diverse population. Previous research indicated how demographics impacted the child, the small sample size did not include all races discussed in previous studies. Two similar cities were also the target audience on Facebook groups where the survey was posted. Dispersing the survey to more people may also reach a more diverse group.

Future research should include a large population to address how a wide variety of families truly impact their children. As some questions may be interpreted differently, providing more information or conducting interviews may allow for confusion to be addressed, rather than a question answered incorrectly or not at all. The majority of the research questions asked throughout the survey came from the original Hofferth and Sandberg study published in 2001. Some questions may have more relevant choices for answers today compared to twenty years ago. Although many changes, additions, or deletions can be made to any study, the current research provides slightly more insight to the importance of families on a child. Continuing to analyze these activities and time spent can provide more awareness and understanding for researchers and parents.

Putting it into Practice: Implications for Parents

Parents can utilize the findings of this study to implement beneficial activities into their child's daily routine. How a child spends their time may have impacts in other areas of their life, including their behaviors and their academic achievements. Sleep, family time, studying, and playing are some areas that may be beneficial to adjust for a parent.

The child who displayed the least number of unwanted behaviors spent a large portion of their weekly and weekend time playing and outdoors, excluding school, sleeping, and eating. The child who displayed the greatest number of unwanted behaviors spent the least amount of time sleeping compared to other children, potential correlating to the unwanted behaviors. This child also spent a large portion of their time weekend time outdoors, playing or watching TV. It is important to note that playing included a variety of activities including video games or doing puzzles. Participants did not indicate how that time was split, so the “playing” time could have been spent engaged in significantly different activities. Family time was also slightly significant, as the families who spent the 2nd and 3rd most amount of time engaged in family time, displayed the least number of children’s unwanted behaviors. As the only major difference between these two children was sleep, it suggests that the amount of time a child spends sleeping is significant for their behavior. This child who displayed the greatest number of unwanted behaviors also tied for the best academic achievements with another child.

The other child who scored high on academic achievements spent their time outside of school and sleeping mainly eating or playing sports. They also typically spent an hour a day during the week in each of the following activities: reading for pleasure, household conversations, outdoors, and playing. Their weekends were largely spent studying or playing sports, followed by eating, spending time outside, and engaged in household conversations. For the child who showed the lowest academic achievements out of the participants, their time spent in activities was not significantly different from the child just described who scored the highest. They spent the same amount of time eating and reading for pleasure. The child who scored higher spent more time studying, playing sports, outdoors, playing, and engaged in household conversations. The child who scored lower spent more time watching TV.

Parents should note that this small sample size does not reflect all children in this age group. It is also important for parents to know that what is most beneficial for one child may vary for different children and in different areas of their life. Based on the current findings of this study, the larger amount of sleep a child got was associated with a lower number of unwanted behaviors. Studying, playing sports, spending time outdoors, playing, and engaged in household conversations were all activities that children who reportedly scored the highest in academic achievements spent doing. Understanding which of the activities analyzed are associated with behavior and academic achievements can allow for parents to implement the best activities for their children to receive the best outcome for their family.

Conclusion

With a new lens on how family time impacts a child's behavior and achievement scores, it appears how parents and children spend their time together and separately can have a positive or negative effect. It is the hope that parents always have their child's best interest at heart. With the results suggesting what activities are the most beneficial for a child and the help of parents implementing those activities for their children, continued focus can be put towards providing the best opportunities. Parents can make choices to engage with their children in healthy, benefiting activities. They can create an atmosphere at home to promote activities correlated to better behaviors and higher achievement scores.

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Table 1. Types of activities children participate in.

Market work (e.g., babysitting, paper route)
Household work (e.g., chores, grocery shopping)
Personal care (e.g., bathing, brushing teeth)
School and/ or Child Care
Eating
Sleeping
Studying
Church (e.g., attending church or church-sponsored meetings)
Visiting (e.g., youth clubs or organizations)
Sports
Outdoors (e.g., gardening, camping, hiking)
Hobbies
Art activities
Playing (e.g., video games, internet usage, board games, puzzles, with toys)
Watching TV
Reading for pleasure
Household conversations
Other

Table 2. Types of behaviors children engage in.

Cheats or tells lies?
Bullies or is mean to others?
NOT seem to feel sorry after misbehaving?
Have sudden changes in mood or feelings?
Feels or complains that no one loves them?
Is too fearful or anxious?
Feels worthless or inferior?
Is unhappy, sad, or depressed?
Seems rather high strung, tense, and nervous?
Argues too much?
Is disobedient at home?
Is stubborn, sullen, or irritable?
Has a strong temper and loses it easily?
Has difficulty concentrating/ paying attention?
Is easily confused or seems in a fog?
Impulsive or acts without thinking?
Has trouble getting their mind off certain things?
Seems restless, overly active, or cannot sit still?
Has trouble getting along with other children?
Is not liked by other children?
Withdrawn or does not get involved with others?
Feels others are out to get them?

Hangs around with kids who get into trouble?
Is secretive, keeps things to themselves?
Worries too much?

Table 3. Achievements the children are able to perform.

Recognize individual letters?
Read words from a list?
Understand the concept of simple numbers?
Listen to a math problem and perform the appropriate calculations?
Write numbers?
Complete age appropriate numerical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division)?
Match a short phrase to the appropriate picture?
Appropriately fill in a missing word from a sentence?

Table 4. Types of activities the mother and father engage in with the children.

Household work (e.g., chores, grocery shopping)
Personal care (e.g., bathing, brushing teeth)
Eating
Sleeping
Studying
Church (e.g., attending church or church-sponsored meetings)
Visiting (e.g., youth clubs or organizations)
Sports
Outdoors (e.g., gardening, camping, hiking)
Hobbies
Art activities
Playing (e.g., video games, internet usage, board games, puzzles, with toys)
Watching TV
Reading for pleasure
Household conversations
Other, please specify

