Exploring Factors that Impede and Enhance Parental Involvement in the African American Community at the Elementary and Secondary Level

Eva Daniel

Introduction

Abstract

There is the expectation that parents be involved in their children's education from primary schooling through their post-secondary education. Guardians enroll their students in school, look for services to meet their kids' needs, and typically attend necessary meetings (e.g., parent-teacher conferences). Research has shown that academic outcomes increase when parents are engaged in their child's education (Henderson, 1994). White parents are more involved in their children's education than Black parents (Abdul –Adil &Farmer,2006). Evidence suggests that barriers to involvement vary by socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, including student and family characteristics (Lampkin, 2021; Redford, Huo & McQuiggan, 2019). Evidence suggests that how particular subgroups (minority vs. non-minority) define involvement can vary (Bartz et al., 2017). The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that impede and can potentially enhance the involvement of African American parents in their children's elementary and secondary education.

Aims of the Research

The primary aim of this pilot study was to examine factors that impede African American parents' involvement in their children's elementary and secondary education.

A secondary aim was to explore how these parents define involvement in the context of supporting their children.

Findings from this study can potentially provide insight into strategies to mitigate barriers and facilitators to enhance parental involvement. A more nuanced understanding of how parents from varying sub-groups define involvement can potentially provide evidence for the need and implementation of more aligned strategies to support parent involvement for these populations.

Research Questions

➢ What are some factors that prevent parents from being involved in their child's education?

➢ What are some strategies that can help parents become more involved in their child's education?

Method

Research Design

This pilot study employed a qualitative design. Interviews were conducted with participants to identify barriers preventing African American parents from being actively involved in their children's elementary and secondary education.

Participants

Convenience and snow-ball sampling was used to recruit participants for this pilot study.

➢ African-American parents of children who attended K–12 schools in Leon County (N=2).

Data Collection and Analysis

Individual interviews were conducted, via zoom, for the pilot study. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

A series of semi-structured questions were posed to parents.

For example:

➢ What do you define as parental involvement in terms of your child's education?

➢ What are the challenges that hinder your involvement?

➢ In your opinion, how can the school help further facilitate parent involvement?

The interviews were recorded verbatim using the zoom recording function.

Open and axial coding was used to code the interview transcripts to analyze and identify themes in the data.

PURPOSE

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Findings

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	
Defining involvement	Relevant: "Investigating and knowing… being knowledgeable" (Participant A)
	Multidimensional: "Being involved in all aspects of their academics, not just academically but socially and relationally" (participant B)
Impeding factors	Time: "Schedule can sometimes interfere with my involvement" (Participant B)
Enhancing Involvement	Volunteering opportunities: "Volunteering, come out and help in a classroom or help in the office or help in, anyway" (Participant A)
	Programs: "After School programs" (Parent A)
	Staff communication: : "I think just communication and interacting um with the parents" (Participant A)
	"if there's concern. If there's concern with my children at school, or if there are behaviors or anything that they feel is interfering with his ability to succeed. I would expect them to reach out to me" (participant B)
	Parent Surveys: "I think one thing would be Surveys kind of um doing. Serve asking questions. Hey? What? What do you? What asking parents? Those questions like? How can we help?" (Participant B)
	Weekend Events: There's nine weeks in the semester, but if you take the time just one time out of those nine weeks on a Saturday morning to set up, you know, donuts and coffee, or whatever you know, just something.

Discussion

My initial hunch was that parents didn't want to be involved. However, my data analysis disproved my bias. Parents do desire to be involved in their children's education. Although the original goal of the study was to identify impeding factors in parental involvement, only one participant noted a factor. Holistically, it was discovered that there are differing definitions of involvement. I will be utilizing the definitions to guide my framework.

Key References

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