

Post-Pandemic Assessment of Parental Involvement in the DREAMS Day Care: Basis for a Proposed Plan of Action

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Abstract

The study titled "Post-Pandemic Assessment of Parental Involvement in the DREAMS Day Care: Basis for a Proposed Plan of Action" aimed to evaluate the extent of parental engagement in the DREAMS Day Care Program, a community extension activity of San Pablo Colleges, after the COVID-19 pandemic. Parental involvement is crucial for fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment for young children, particularly during challenging times. This research sought to assess the impact of the pandemic on parental participation and identify potential areas for improvement to develop an action plan for enhanced parental involvement. Using a descriptive-quantitative approach, data was collected from 25 parents through a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The results revealed a very positive extent of parental involvement in various activities related to their child's preschool education. The majority of parents strongly agreed on indicators like active support in learning activities, regular communication with teachers, participation in school events, and discussions with their child about their preschool experiences. The study acknowledges that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, parents remained actively involved in their child's education. It emphasizes the importance of promoting and supporting parental involvement in early childhood education to create a strong foundation for children's future success and well-being. In order to further enhance parental engagement, the proposed plan of action includes initiatives such as enhancing communication and updates to parents, offering workshops on supporting their child's learning, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, providing opportunities for parental volunteering, and addressing any barriers hindering parental involvement.

Keywords

Community extension, Post-pandemic assessment, Parental involvement

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Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on various aspects of society, including education and early childhood development (Sheldon, 2002). As educational institutions and communities continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic, it becomes crucial to assess how parental involvement in early childhood education, particularly in community-based programs like the DREAMS Day Care, has been affected (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). The DREAMS Day Care Program, a community extension activity of San Pablo Colleges, plays a vital role in providing quality early childhood education and support to less privileged children in the adopted community of DI Calijan, San Pablo City.

The pandemic has necessitated significant adjustments in education, with temporary closures of schools and childcare centers to mitigate the spread of the virus (Singh & Sood, 2017). As restrictions are gradually lifted and educational institutions begin to reopen, it is essential to evaluate how parental involvement in the DREAMS Day Care Program has evolved in this new post-pandemic landscape (Walker, Wilkins, & Dallaire, 2005). This descriptive-quantitative study aims to assess the level of parental involvement and its impact on the program, with the ultimate goal of formulating an action plan to optimize parental engagement for the program's continued success (Epstein, 2001).

The primary aim of this study is to conduct a post-pandemic assessment of parental involvement in the DREAMS Day Care Program and determine its implications on early childhood education and development (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This study holds significant implications for early childhood education and community-based programs in the post-pandemic era (Jeynes, 2005). The findings will provide valuable insights into how parental involvement in the DREAMS Day Care Program has evolved amid the challenges posed by the pandemic (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Understanding the current level of engagement and the factors influencing it will guide program administrators in devising targeted strategies to foster a strong partnership between parents and the program (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002).

Methodology

The study employed the quantitative- descriptive research design. The respondents in this study were 25 sampled parents of children currently enrolled in the DREAMS Day Care Program. The parents were selected using convenience sampling, considering their accessibility and willingness to participate in the study. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was developed to collect data on parental involvement in the DREAMS Day Care Program. Data collection for this study took place over a period of two weeks. The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires to the 25 selected parents through paper format. Clear instructions were provided to the parents on how to complete and return the questionnaires. To maximize response rates, follow-up reminders were sent to non-respondents after one week. Upon completion of data collection, the responses from the survey questionnaires were compiled and entered into a statistical analysis software package. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize their responses to the survey items. Mean scores were calculated to assess the level of parental

involvement and satisfaction, as well as the perceived impact of the DREAMS Day Care Program on children's development.

Results and Discussion

Parental involvement in their children's pre-school education

The participants strongly agreed with all the indicators, leading to a total mean value of 3.75, which is verbally interpreted as "to a very great extent of participation." This result underscores the critical role parents play in their child's early education and the impact of their active involvement on their child's development and learning experiences. The strong agreement by parents on actively supporting their child in learning activities reflects their commitment to nurturing their child's educational journey. By engaging in activities like reading together, providing educational materials, and assisting with homework, parents contribute significantly to their child's cognitive development and academic success.

Table 1. Extent of Parental Involvement in their Child's Preschool Education

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I actively participate in my child's preschool activities.	3.86	Strongly Agree
I regularly communicate with teacher regarding my child's development.	3.86	Strongly Agree
My involvement positively impacts a child's learning and social skills.	3.73	Strongly Agree
I volunteer and contribute to preschool events or projects.	3.55	Strongly Agree
Average	3.75	To a very great extent

Parents' strong agreement on regular communication with teachers demonstrates the importance they place on maintaining open lines of communication with the preschool educators. Effective communication allows parents to stay informed about their child's progress, strengths, and areas for improvement, enabling them to actively support their child's learning needs. Moreover, parents' active participation in school events and meetings highlights their dedication to being present and engaged in their child's preschool experiences. The strong agreement on parental involvement in school decision-making signifies that parents are actively engaged in shaping the policies and programs of the preschool. Their active participation in decision-making processes empowers them to have a say in their child's education and fosters a sense of ownership and partnership with the school. Parents' strong agreement on advocating for their child's needs shows their proactive approach to ensuring their child's individual needs and preferences are met.

The findings indicate that the participants' strong agreement on all indicators reflects a comprehensive and dedicated approach to parental involvement in their child's preschool education. This level of engagement holds significant benefits for the child's academic, social, and emotional development. Parental involvement has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in promoting positive educational outcomes and setting the foundation for lifelong learning and success.

Parental participation in school activities

Table 2 presents the frequency of parental participation in various activities related to their child's preschool education. The responses reveal the level of involvement by parents in different aspects of their child's learning journey, including parent-teacher meetings, at-home activities or assignments, special events organized by the preschool, and discussions with their child about their preschool experiences.

Table 2. Frequency of Parental Participation in the Activities of their Child's Preschool Education

Activities	Very Often	Often
parent-teacher meetings or conferences.	18	7
at-home activities or assignments given by the preschool.	15	10
special events organized by the preschool.	20	5
discussions with my child about their preschool experiences	20	5

The table shows that 18 parents responded "very often" to participating in parent-teacher meetings or conferences, while 7 parents answered "often." This indicates that a majority of parents are actively engaged in these formal meetings with their child's teachers. Parent-teacher meetings serve as a valuable platform for parents to receive feedback on their child's progress, discuss any concerns, and collaborate with educators to support their child's learning needs. Fifteen parents indicated that they engage in at-home activities or assignments given by the preschool "very often," while 10 parents responded "often." This demonstrates a significant level of commitment by parents to extend learning beyond the classroom setting. By participating in at-home activities and assisting with assignments, parents reinforce classroom learning and provide additional support to their child's educational growth. The responses indicate that 20 parents participate in special events organized by the preschool "very often," while 5 parents do so "often." This high level of involvement suggests that parents value and actively contribute to the school's special events and activities.

The table reveals that 20 parents engage in discussions with their child about their preschool experiences "very often," and 5 parents do so "often." Regular communication with their child allows parents to better understand their child's feelings, interests, and challenges related to preschool. These discussions promote open communication and create a supportive environment for the child to share their thoughts and experiences. The results in Table 2 showcase a commendable level of parental participation in various activities related to their child's preschool education. The high frequency of parental involvement in parent-teacher meetings, at-home activities, special events, and discussions with their child reflects a strong commitment to supporting their child's early learning journey.

Barriers and challenges that prevent parents' involvement in the pre-school

Table 3 presents the barriers and challenges that prevent parents' involvement in the pre-school reveals a mix of responses, with the majority of the respondents choosing "none." However, a notable number of participants identified specific obstacles that hinder their active engagement in their child's early education. The barriers mentioned include lack of time due to work or other

commitments, lack of understanding about how to support their child's learning, communication barriers with preschool staff, and feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at the preschool. The majority of respondents choosing "none" as a barrier suggests that a significant portion of parents do not perceive substantial obstacles to their involvement in their child's pre-school. This is a positive indicator of the school's efforts in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for parents. However, it is essential to address the specific challenges mentioned by some parents to ensure that parental involvement remains strong and consistent.

Table 3. Barriers/challenges in Parents' Involvement in School

Barriers/Challenges	f	%
Lack of time due to work or other commitments	4	16.0
Lack of understanding about how to support their learning	1	4.0
Communication barriers with preschool staff	1	4.0
Feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at the preschool	1	4.0
None	18	72.0

The response from four participants citing lack of time due to work or other commitments highlights a common challenge faced by parents in today's fast-paced and demanding world. Balancing work responsibilities, family obligations, and personal commitments can be overwhelming, leaving parents with limited time to actively participate in their child's pre-school activities. This barrier underscores the need for flexible and accessible approaches to parental involvement that accommodate varying schedules and allow parents to engage in meaningful ways. Moreover, the response of one participant expressing feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at the preschool raises concerns about the school's overall climate and inclusivity. Parents' perceptions of the school's environment and culture significantly influence their willingness to participate actively. To overcome this barrier, preschools should prioritize creating a welcoming and supportive atmosphere that encourages parental involvement and values the contributions of all families.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The strong agreement by participants on all indicators regarding the extent of parental involvement in their child's preschool education signifies a very great extent of participation. The proactive engagement of parents in their child's learning journey demonstrates their dedication to providing the best possible educational experiences for their child. The strong presence of parents in parent-teacher meetings, at-home activities, special events, and discussions with their child reflects a very positive extent of involvement. This high level of engagement is a testament to the parents' dedication to their child's education and their commitment to fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment. The majority of parents in the pre-school do not report significant barriers to their involvement, but a subset of respondents identified specific challenges that hinder their active engagement. The strong consensus among participants regarding the actions that can effectively support and encourage parental involvement in the DREAMS Day Care Center.

The findings of this action research provide a roadmap for the DREAMS Day Care Center to foster a dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship with parents. By implementing these

actions, the center can create a nurturing and empowering environment that maximizes children's educational experiences and fosters their holistic development. The findings served as the basis of the action steps contained in the plan of action. The strong partnership between parents and the DREAMS Day Care Center will ensure that every child receives the best possible support, setting the foundation for a successful and fulfilling educational journey.

The proposed plan entails strengthening parental engagement in the DREAMS Day Care using essential areas identified from the "Post Pandemic Assessment of Parental Involvement in the DREAMS Day Care." First, it focuses on improving communication with parents by implementing an open and direct communication channel, conducting open house meetings and delivering newsletters regularly. The second prong of the plan is the holding of parental workshops whereby parents are equipped with the necessary information and training for enhancing their child's learning, especially during home-based studies.

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