**Manuscript ID 12-255**

**“Time Management and Home-Based Parent Involvement in Head Start Families”**

**Reviewer: 1**

The data analysis and presentation of results are not sharply focused on the issue of time management and organization, however. As a result, it is difficult to follow the discussion at times and to find support for the practice implications the authors suggest. The manuscript could be strengthened by concentrating the analysis specifically on parents’ time management strategies or, if the focus of the study is intended to be broader than time management, by itemizing and addressing systematically the research questions and issues the study aims to address.

**All parts of the manuscript were revised to focus specifically on parents’ time management, which was the focus of this study.**

Some elements of the analytic approach require clarification or better justification. First, the reason for aggregating analyses across the homework completion groups is not clearly explained. While the difference in attendance between completion groups should be noted as a limitation, it is unclear why a relatively small number of participants from the low-completion group makes separate thematic analyses infeasible.

**The original intention of this research was to compare across groups of parents who participated in the homework activities program with high frequency versus those who did not. However, due to very low response rates from the low-homework completion group, we decided to analyze the data in aggregate. This is explained in the analysis section.**

**One reason for not comparing groups was that the participants in the high- and low-homework completion groups did not experience the same study conditions (i.e., collaborative discussion with a wide variety of perspectives) given that there were only two participants in each of the low-completion groups versus four or more in the high-completion groups. It is our contention that offering individual-level comments in the low-participation group could potentially compromise their confidentiality, rendering separate thematic analyses infeasible.**

Second, several aspects of the validation process should be described more precisely. For instance, the meaning of “sources were triangulated” (p. 14) is unclear, since there is only one source of data for this study.

**We removed the term “sources”, agreeing that the word choice created confusion for the reader. We also removed references to triangulated validation methods.**

The statement that “themes were corroborated (guided by participant input)” (p. 14) is also vague. How did participants guide this process?

**We removed “(guided by participant input)” on page 14.**

The authors could improve the manuscript’s presentation substantially by addressing the following issues:

1. The introduction and discussion of previous research should provide stronger motivation for the study. One option would be to order information in these sections as follows: (1) the importance of parent involvement, specifically participation in early childhood programs; (2) findings on previous interventions to promote involvement through home-based activities, particularly barriers to parent participation; and (3) findings from previous research on time management and organization among low-income families.

**The revised introduction now begins with (1) brief discussion of home-based parent involvement; (2) focus on the importance of parent involvement; (3) brief findings of relevant interventions to increase parent involvement; (4) barriers to home-based parent involvement; and (5) discussion of the lens through which this study explores time management and organization. It should be noted that the last section contains few references to other studies about time management in low-income families because of the paucity of such research.**

The description of the KKCHS intervention is separated between the background section and the methods section. It should be consolidated.

**This has been reorganized to ensure better flow.**

1. Some discussion of previous research on parent involvement interventions (p. 1-4) seems extraneous. The discussion should focus on findings regarding parent participation. Since the present study does not address whether the KKCHS intervention affects child outcomes, discussion of the effectiveness of other interventions (such as Project EASE) seems out of place.

**Revised to reduce descriptions of interventions, focusing rather on the barriers such interventions aim to remediate.**

1. The relevance of the study by Dearing, et al. (2001) to parent involvement barriers isn’t clear (p.5). This study appears to investigate the relationship between family income and child outcomes. The manuscript doesn’t describe any findings on the relationship between income and parent involvement.

**Dearing reference removed.**

1. The presentation of results extends beyond time management when addressing such themes as *inclusion of siblings, physical environment,* and *engagement strategies.* If the study purpose is broader than “examining time management and organization strategies,” (p. 8) it should be described more accurately.

**The above topics are now included under the heading “homework activity management” which describes how parents used time efficiently within the homework activity itself.**

1. The findings from Roy, et al. (2004) regarding mothers’ strategies for organizing time, currently presented in the discussion section (p. 24), should be noted in section on previous research regarding time management and organization among families.

**OK—changed.**

1. The discussion of implications for practice suggests steps that are not supported by the study findings. For instance, the manuscript suggests that programs could provide parents “the opportunity to role play and ask questions about how to interact with their child during…activities” since parents “may be less likely to engage in home based parent involvement because of poor personal educational experiences or a low sense of parenting efficacy” (p. 28). Yet the study findings don’t appear to address parents’ educational experiences or feelings about parenting abilities.

**OK—revised to focus on inclusion of aspects from the study’s findings and removed suggestions beyond that.**

1. The conclusion section introduces the concept of a strengths-based perspective on family time management. If this concept has relevance for program practice, it should be addressed in the discussion section. In general, the conclusion section seems rather thin.

**OK—removed.**

1. A few minor errors and instances of awkward phrasing in the manuscript include:
   * The meaning of the term “time creation” (p. 6, first paragraph) is unclear.

**This sentence was rewritten to avoid use of this term.**

* + The last paragraph on page 6 discusses suggests that previous studies have a “shared variable.” It may be clearer to say that the studies have similar findings if, indeed, they do; the links among findings of the studies cited are not entirely apparent.

**OK- changed**

* + In the first paragraph under Methods of Parental Involvement (p.22) “parents’” should be “parents”.

**OK- changed**

* + The Dominguez and Watkins (2003) citation does not appear in the list of references.

**We revised section, so this reference is no longer included in the article.**

**Reviewer: 2**

Minor issues:

1. Throughout the paper, the author uses quotations. Instead, it would be better to summarize /paraphrase and simply cite the reference. For example, the section with the heading "Investigating Time Management and Organization" has several paragraphs that are direct quotations. Please put them into your own words.

**OK-changed.**

2. I recommend that the authors check grammar and run-ons. There are several awkward sentences (e.g. Last sentence of first paragraph in intro)

**OK—Checked and changed**

3. More recent studies should be included - e.g. Duncan and Murnane recently published "Whither Opportunity" which refers to the achievement gap

**OK—this study has been included**

4. Some specific details which are not critical to informing the study process can be foot noted (e.g. description of response rates, p12).

**We thought these details were important enough to leave in the text.**

5. Spell-out KKCHS first before using acronym.

**OK—changed**

6. The last sentence in the second paragraph of the results section addresses a limitation. This sentence would be appropriate later in the limitations section, so the reader does not discount the results section upfront.

**OK-changed**

7. The first sentence in the first paragraph of the "Home Based Parent Involvement and Intervention Efforts" section has two ideas packed into one long sentence. This can be split into two separate sentences.

**This sentence has been deleted.**

Major issues:

1. The descriptions of interventions in the introduction are too detailed, given that they are not your focus intervention. Reduce and summarize to only convey the main point of the study/intervention.

**OK—reduced focus on interventions.**

2. The study purpose section should not include results (i.e. "Feedback from some of the parents..."). Instead, describe more why this study is needed and what you hope to gain from this analysis. Explicitly include here the research question and hypothesis, based on the lit review covered earlier in the preceding paragraphs.

**We took out the “feedback…”sentence. We cannot include a specific directional or non-directional hypothesis or research questions beyond those listed as part of the focus group prompts for this study given that it uses qualitative methods and is exploratory in nature. One of the purposes of this study was to provide the initial foundation from which future studies may derive research questions and hypotheses.**

3. I highly recommend the use of tables.

a. It would be much clearer and useful to people if they can see what types of activities were engaged in the homework activity. This could perhaps be added in an appendix. A list of some of the major activities with a column indicating the frequency of participation in that activity would be extremely helpful

**Data on which homework activities were completed, and which were not, were not part of this study. Parent participation or lack thereof, was simply the basis for this focus group study on time management for Head Start parents. A homework activity example is included in Appendix A for illustrative purposes.**

b. Since barriers to parent involvement is a key aspect of your study, a table displaying a list of the main barriers, along with frequencies of responses would be beneficial to the reader. I can imagine that some barriers were only listed by a small number of participants and those can probably be lumped as "other." However, as a reader, it would be helpful and interesting to see in table format parent's most common challenges.

**Listing the frequency of responses is not feasible or appropriate for this study given the use of qualitative methods and the fact that provision of individual comments may inadvertently compromise participant confidentiality. Furthermore, participants’ comments occurred within a group context and cannot be considered as “stand-alone” notations as they would in a one-on-one interview. However, the authors agree that a table listing the overall themes and sub-themes would be helpful to the reader and have provided one.**

4. Organization of methods section: The author has included all the relevant components in the methods section. However, I suggest a re-organization, as the current order is difficult to follow:

a. First, describe KKCHS sample

b. Then describe the homework activities

c. Next describe your survey methods - this will then lead into your data analysis section.

**This study did not use a survey…this was a qualitative research study using focus group methodology. However, we did reorganize per the reviewer’s suggestion.**

5. Participant selection process: How did the authors decide on the cut offs? (e.g. High is >= 10 returned activities, low as < 1-5 returned activities). Please describe the logic behind this process. It would be nice to see the frequency distribution for each number of returned activities.

## High- vs. low-participation group cut-offs were determined by looking for meaningful natural patterns in the homework response rates tracked by classroom teachers. The reason this method was used was to facilitate comparison between extremes given that we were originally looking for differences in time management and organization techniques between groups. This notation was added to the “Recruitment and Participant Selection Process” section.

6. Why are the sample sizes of the focus groups so small? Could this be an issue? (Only 4 low homework completion groups completed 2 focus groups).

**We recognize and agree that some of the focus groups had a small number of participants. This issue was specifically addressed at several points throughout the article. One of the primary factors for aggregating response across focus groups was because we thought it inappropriate to compare high- and low-participation groups given the disparity in focus group participation.**

7. One major issue I had with this paper is that the differential effect of parent involvement by background characteristic was not examined. I wonder if there are characteristics common among the high parent involvement group and low parent involvement group and in the reasons they give as barriers to engaging in the homework activity? For example, perhaps income, education level of mom, and age of mom can contribute to why some parents are highly involved and others are not.

**While this is a very interesting point, the overall small sample size is not conducive to such analyses, especially because there were so few participants from the low-involvement group.**

8. COFI (Community organization and family initiative) is an organization that has surveyed thousands of low-income families and conducted analyses on barriers to parent involvement and participation in preschool programs. The work done by the authors overlap with COFI's work (i.e. identifying challenges to parent involvement and identifying effective strategies in overcoming these barriers) and should at the least cite their work.

**The authors investigated this very hopeful resource. We found a Chicago-based organization under this name, focused on improving the lives of at-risk children and their families. However, we did not find any references to the survey the reviewer suggested in this comment.**