

ABSTRACT

Father Involvement And Its Impact On Academic Achievement Among Grade Six Students In Kingston, Jamaica

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This purpose of this research paper was to examine whether father involvement, along with other selected factors, impacted Grade Six children's academic performance. In addition, it reviewed which factors affected father involvement and explored fathers' attitudes to their fathering role in more depth.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. Survey design, using statistical analyses including multiple regression, cross tabs, t-tests and factor analysis were employed for the quantitative component. Focus group discussions and in depth interviews were utilized for the qualitative segment. The survey sample consisted of 176 cases (176 main caregivers matched with 130 fathers and father-figures) of grade 7 students, drawn from 4 Jamaican Corporate Area schools. A retrospective look was taken at the children's academic achievement and situation during grade 6. The schools were selected with the guidance of personnel from the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEYC) to represent a wide range of academic performance, all socio economic groups and both genders. Father involvement was measured using the *Inventory of Father Involvement Scale* (Hawkins, 2002).

The study generated a regression model which was statistically significant at the 5% level and explained 39.6% of the variation in children's academic scores. The variables in the model were: socio-economic status, father involvement, mother occupation, and mother and father hours worked per week and parent-figure relationship quality. The research further found statistically significant relationships at the 5% level between father involvement and: father residence, parent-figure union status, parent-figure relationship quality, who was acting as the child's parent-figures and parent-figures living in the child's home.

Most Jamaican fathers/father-figures in the study viewed the fathering role as very important and almost three quarters (72%) reported being highly involved in their child's life. This study adds to the growing evidence against the stereotype of the marginal Jamaican male, and points to the apparent emergence of some "nurturant" fathers, involved in multiple dimensions of their child's life. While this is encouraging there remains a core of marginal fathers as 23% of study children had no one acting as their father figure. In addition, 16% of all study fathers were found to be completely absent from their children's lives. All of the completely absentee fathers were non resident, and a sizeable proportion were deceased (44%) meaning that 56% were actually absent.

Key words: Hilary Anne Wehby; Father Involvement; Fathering; Father Role; Parenting; Parent and Child; Child Rearing; Child Management; Child Care; Family; Family Relationship; Academic Achievement; Educational Attainment