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RESEARCH ARTICLE

USING A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FOR EVALUATING PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT BLACK MALES ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

This collaborative evaluation explored the distribution of perceived parent involvement factors during high school, from the perspective of academically successful Black male college students. One hundred and forty-six (146) Black males enrolled in an undergraduate degree seeking-program at a university in the southern region of the United States completed Yan and Lin's (2005) parent involvement during high school survey, adapted from NELS: 88 (National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988). A collaborative evaluation approach using the Model for Collaborative Evaluations MCE was used in this formative evaluation. Results revealed that among the distribution of the three factors (Family Obligation, Parent Information Network and Family Norms), Family Norms was perceived as the most prevalent parent involvement subscale factor during high school for this particular population. Under the Family Norms factor subscale "Parent-teenager relationship" emerged as the most dominant variable, followed by "Educational expectations." Implications for using the MCE in evaluating school parent involvement programs and research are delineated.

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Introduction:-

Status of Black Males in Schools

The academic underachievement of black male youth is a perplexing theme in recent literature. Consequently, research has shown that generally Black males underachieve academically when compared to Black female and White male counterparts (Ford & Moore, 2013; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Black males experience underachievement in specific classes such as science and mathematics classes when compared to black females (Noguera, 2008). Similarly, Black male students are overly represented in areas linked to special education classifications, yet underrepresented in honor classes and advanced placement courses in secondary school settings (Whiting & Ford, 2009).

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The implications of underachievement go beyond academic life, as Black males suffer higher rates of suspension, three times more, and expulsion than White males (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Again, Black males as well had a higher dropout rate compared to White males and Black females (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). According to Adkison-Bradley, Johnson, Rawls, and Plunkett (2006), Black males' overrepresentation in special education classrooms is directly associated with inadequate job preparedness, limited employability skills, and higher frequency of incarcerations. Furthermore, Howard (2013) reported that a strong correlation does exist between Black males who underperformed academically and dropped out of school. This leads to a higher involvement in the criminal justice system, a systematic process known as the school to prison pipeline. In addition, Brown (2018) noted that statistics from various research that displays implicit racial bias in schools can be linked to historically constructed narratives where Black men are labeled as dangerous and fearful.

Parental Influence

While there are multiple factors that directly influence a Black male youth's life, parental involvement is regarded as a positive impact on student's academic success and achievement (Deplanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Feuerstein, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). As a result, scholars have implied that a lack of involvement contributes to Black male youth's lack of academic achievement. Clark's (1983) study on poor Black children, for example, revealed parental involvement was low for students who were lower achieving when compared to higher achieving peers. Nonetheless, it has been suggested a lack of research is a reason for why poor Black parents were being identified as the contributing factor for their children's underachievement.

Therefore, it is critical to reflect upon implicit racial bias found within schools and generalizations made not only on Black male youth, but their parents as well. Historically, parents of Black male youth have been stereotyped as non-participatory and inattentive in public school environments (Chapman and Bhopal, 2013). Realistically, research has shown that parents of Black male youth do value education and will battle toxic school culture ensuring success for their children. Specifically, Black mothers have been recognized as advocates for Black boys with the aim of them not wanting to be labelled as "troublemakers" (Chapman & Bhopal, 2013). Likewise, many other studies have shown statements from Black males revealing how parents have contributed towards their academic success. According to Howard (2013), black males stated their success was due to their parents who "stayed on them" when it came to their homework and creating higher standards for academic achievement.

Employing a Collaborative Evaluation Approach

This article describes how evaluators and stakeholders could combine their expertise in order to make their choices more defensible and provide a more comprehensive approach to program reform. Particularly, the Model for Collaborative Evaluations (MCE) can be used to transform evaluations of School Based Parent Involvement programs into a joint responsibility process between the evaluators and collaboration members (specific stakeholders). The MCE is a framework for guiding collaborative evaluations in a precise, realistic, and useful manner (Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2013).

A collaborative evaluation approach using the MCE was used in this formative evaluation to actively engage the key stakeholders as collaboration members (CMs) throughout the evaluation process. This approach was selected because those stakeholders embraced evaluation as a learning process for improvement. The model revolves around a set of six interactive components specific to conducting a collaborative evaluation in order to establish priorities and achieve a supportive evaluation environment (e.g., Rodríguez-Campos, 2015; Rodríguez-Campos & Rincones-Gómez, 2018). The following are the MCE components: (a) identify the situation, (b) clarify the expectations, (c) establish a collective commitment, (d) ensure open communication, (e) encourage effective practices, and (f) follow specific guidelines (see Figure 1).

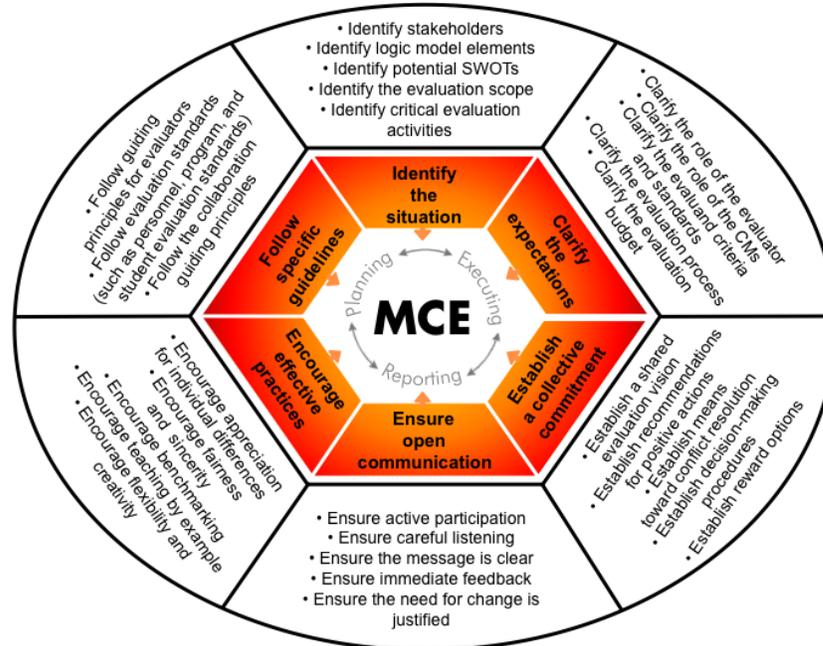


Figure 1:The Model for Collaborative Evaluations. Reprinted from *Collaborative Evaluations Step-by-Step* (p. 14), by L. Rodríguez-Campos & R. Rincones-Gómez (2nd ed.), 2013, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Copyright 2013 by Liliana Rodríguez-Campos and Rigoberto Rincones-Gómez. Reprinted with permission.

Each of the MCE subcomponents, shown as bullet points, includes a set of ten steps suggested to support the proper understanding and use of the model. Consequently, checklists can contribute to the improvement of validity, reliability, and credibility of an evaluation. The MCE emphasizes the involvement of all stakeholders (parents and the Black male students) impacted by the school-based Parent Involvement programs, thereby increasing the chances that the school will utilize evaluation recommendations.

Purpose of the Evaluation

Brown and Donner (2011) noted that part of the problem of reconstructing the Black male narrative is inherent in the process of promoting and simulating meaningful social and educational policy. Understanding the life of Black male youth is essential in developing a new narrative that can implement positive change. While there are studies revealing the influence the role race plays within Black mother's perceptions of their children, little has been published considering Black male youths' own perception (Williams, Lozada-Smith, Lambouths, & Rowley 2017).

Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) also emphasized the importance of exploring parenting practices and involvement of academically successful Black male students. It is important to glean understanding directly from Black males themselves on which parental involvement factors have contributed their academic success, because this information may assist in helping to design interventions to improve the academic performance of other children (particularly Black males). Thus, the goal of this evaluation was to identify the distribution of selected perceived parent involvement factors during high school from academically successful Black male students currently enrolled in a four-year college.

After initial contact with the client (program coordinator) to discuss the situation in this evaluation, we were introduced to the key stakeholders, a subgroup of the survey respondents. Then, we invited them to publicly and privately share their ideas on their expectations about the evaluation and how they could contribute to it. As a result, everyone was eager to embark on the evaluation process as collaboration members (CMs). This collaborative evaluation addressed Black males' perspectives of parental involvement factors that contributed to their academic success. Specifically, (1) What parental involvement factors from the Parental Involvement During High School (PIDHS) questionnaire did Black male students identify as important during high school? and (2) What was the relative rank of importance of factors Black male students identified?

The CMs were willing to work collaboratively in the evaluation because they truly were part of the decision-making process with their opinions valued. Obviously, the level of involvement varied among everyone who collaborated in the effort and was based on their skills, ability, and availability. The evaluation findings were used to reflect upon lessons learned and shared findings with the key stakeholders and external parties (Fetterman, Rodríguez-Campos, Zukowsky, 2018). Collaborative evaluations are most useful when stakeholders continue working together and results are used for ongoing improvement.

Methods:-

Design

This collaborative evaluation employed a survey to collect data from Black male students regarding their perspectives of their parents' involvement in their educational experiences in high school. The survey was developed by Yan and Lin (2005) to measure parental involvement factors that may contribute to students' academic achievement. Surveys are among the most reliable methods of collecting measurable data for social sciences (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). In addition, a survey found to be the method of choice when collecting primary data from a large sample, hence the reason for choosing it for this particular evaluation, which required a larger sample (McDonald & Headlam, 2008).

Procedures

This collaborative evaluation was part of a larger investigation involving a convenient purposeful sample of 146 Black males enrolled in a degree seeking-program at a University in the southern region of the United States. Two selection criteria were used to determine relevant stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation survey. They had to be currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree-seeking program and had to be willing to complete the survey. The targeted sample size of 146 undergraduates ensured statistical power for the factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999).

The identified undergraduates were asked about their willingness to be involved in the collaborative evaluation, after being verbally informed about it, given the brief purpose, and consent form. They were then given a pencil and paper survey that took approximately 10 minutes to complete. In addition, some undergraduates were also invited to become involved more actively in the collaboration evaluation as collaboration member (CMs), based on their skills, abilities, and availabilities.

Instruments

The survey used in the collaborative evaluation consisted of two sections: demographic information and the Parental Involvement During High School (PIDHS) questionnaire. In the demographic section, survey respondents were asked to provide demographic information.

Respondents indicated their age, zip code, state or country, major, current year in college, high school and current college GPA, family income, father's education, mother's education, parents' current relationship, and whom they lived with during the high school years.

This second portion of the survey consisted of the 39-item Parental Involvement During High School questionnaire for students, adapted from Yan and Lin's (2005) assessment items. Yan and Lin (2005) conducted a principal component factor analysis of the data from the NELS:88 (National Education Longitudinal study of 1988) data for students on parent involvement and found nine (9) unique factors that were grouped into three components based on social capital theory (Coleman, 1988). These were family obligation, parent information networks and family norms.

Their data set consisted of 19,386 12th grade students tracked longitudinally from 8th grade, with three points of data collection. The students represented four ethnic groups; African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American and Caucasian-American. The three dimensions of parent involvement assessed with this instrument were: family obligations, parent information networks and family norms (Yan & Lin, 2005). The instrument used a 4-point Likert Type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (very much true).

The family obligation dimension examined involvement in parent-teacher's organization (PTO/PTA) activities ($\alpha = .73$), attending high school programs (Pasp) ($\alpha = .69$) and discussing school topics with their child (DST) ($\alpha = .80$). The parent information networks dimension examined parent(s) made contact with school about performance (Per)

($\alpha = .80$), behavior (BEH) ($\alpha = .61$), parents' knowledge of schoolwork (KSW) ($\alpha = .68$), and knowledge of my friends' parents (KFP) ($\alpha = .55$). The final dimension, family norms, examined family rules (FR) ($\alpha = .61$), educational expectations (EE) ($\alpha = .61$) and parent-teenager relationship (PTR) ($\alpha = .60$). The validity and reliability of the survey alpha coefficients ranged from a 5.5 to 8.0.

For the purpose of this collaborative evaluation, the instrument was modified to reflect past experience of parent involvement during high school. Also, item 29 of the original instrument: "parent(s) limited TV watching or video games," was modified by the researcher for cultural relevancy to include, "or social media and internet entertainment via smart phones and computer devices."

The respondents were asked to rate the items on this survey questionnaire on a 4-point Likert Type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (very much true). The survey took approximately 10 minutes for respondents to complete.

Results:-

The descriptive statistics for each latent factor (Family obligation, Parent information network, Family norms) and their measurable variables and alpha coefficients are presented in Table 2. The "Family norm" factor had the highest means at (3.21), followed by "Family obligation" means of (2.40). While "Parent information network" recorded the lowest means of (2.37). The *Family Norms* factor consisted of three mean variables of which "Parent-teenager relationship" recorded the highest means at (3.66), followed by Educational expectation at (3.35). *Family Norms* were perceived as the most prevalent parent involvement factor during high school for this particular population.

The alpha coefficients criterion is used to determine the reliability of an instrument and its items. Alpha coefficients are considered acceptable at .70 (Nunnally, 1978). The alpha coefficients for all of the measured variables in this instrument ranged from .68 to .92. The variables with alphas slightly below .70 were all associated with the latent factor of "Family norms"- "Educational expectation" at (.69), "Family rules" at (.69) and "Parent-teenager relationship" at (.68). It must be noted, that although the reliability alphas for all the measured variables in Family norms were just below .70, the factor received the highest means at (3.21). Another point of emphasis is the variable with the lowest alpha (.68) "Parent-teenager relationship" also recorded the highest mean of (3.66).

Discussion:-

The main purpose of this collaborative evaluation was to identify the distribution of selected perceived parent involvement factors during high school from academically successful Black male students currently enrolled in a four-year college. The result of this evaluation revealed that subscale factor of "Family norms" was the most prevalent based on the means. This was followed by "Family obligation", and finally "Parent information network" had the lowest means. Within "Family norms" there were three variables: 1) "Parent-teenager relationship" which received the highest means, 2) "Educational expectation", and 3) "Family rules" which received the lowest means. To conclude, for this specific population, Family norms was found to be the most prevalent parent involvement factor during high school.

Compared to earlier studies, the evaluation result of the "parent-teenager relationship" suggest that parents' ability to provide attention and give praise and rewards to children helped in many respects of school success, including a child's self-concept and motivation (DeDonno and Fagan, 2013; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). These suggestions align with several other studies that reinforce the ideas that parent-teenager relationship is an important factor in a child's academic achievement, specifically for Black males. Weiser and Riggio (2010) claimed that the quality of the parent-child relationship could impact a child's overall feeling of self-competence academically. Likewise, Turner, Chandler, and Heffler (2009) found that families who demonstrated a high level of support, engagement, involvement, and opportunities, have children that appeared to secure higher academic achievements. In addition, Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) have suggested that the father-son relationship is an important influence on Black males and their academic success.

Besides parent-teenager relationship, there are some essential variables that require further inspection; "Parents' knowledge about my schoolwork" and "My parents had discussions with me about school topics". While both variables did receive average means, they do not align with stereotypes that parents of Black males are not involved

with their sons' education and that young Black males are labeled as troublemakers (Chapman & Bhopal, 2013). Even though these parents, by their sons' recollection, were not visible or present on school campuses, and did receive below average ratings for involvement in parent teacher organization/association activities and making contact with school about their behavior, in contrast at home they were actively engaged by facilitating discussions with their sons regarding course work and future academic plans such as college. Additionally, it's important to note that the parents of these young Black males rarely made visits to the schools regarding the students' behavior and academic performance. This could be due to scheduling conflicts such as work or family obligations, not the stereotypical belief that these parents do not care.

The findings of this evaluation were somewhat consistent with Yan and Lin's (2005) finding as family norms was again the factor with the highest mean. The results differ within the three variables that fall under Family norms. For this specific population, Parent-teenager relationship was the most prevalent variable, while the results from their study suggested that Educational expectation was the variable with the highest means then followed by parent-teenager relationship. The findings from this study revealed that Black males perform better in school when their parents have high academic expectations while maintaining an interactive and nurturing relationship with them.

Implications for Schools

There are several implications that can be suggested from the findings in this evaluation, including specific actions schools can invest in. To start, school personnel becoming multiculturally competent and self-aware is a foundational step towards systemically creating school environments that promote academic success among culturally different and lower social economic status students (Cole & Grothaus, 2014). School personnel must be open to becoming trained and competent in multicultural and social justice advocacy to establish safe spaces so Black males and their parents feel welcome and inclined to become more involved and engaged in schools (Ford & Moore, 2013). Schools that are able to build this communicative, positive environment with Black males and their parents will promote more school involvement and continue momentum toward academic success (Moore III, et. al. 2008, Harris & Hodges, 2017).

Schools can take a plethora of actions to increase parental involvement in Black males' lives, including the ability to successfully connect. School personnel can be represented as a form of social capital to increase the amount of information related to academic resources, but also potential opportunities, community resources, and supportive outlets that are available for students and families of color, and those of low-income first-generation families (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

In addition, we are proposing that it is essential for schools to consider employing the MCE to evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement programs, especially considering the stereotypical views to the lack of parent involvement for this particular population. This inclusive approach would incorporate the perspective of all relevant stakeholders including the parents and Black male students, to ascertain feedback regarding the effectiveness of programs and information to improve the initiatives. It is imperative to have a collaborative atmosphere where there is a balance of power and everyone feels represented in an appropriate and equitable way. Therefore, who does what (i.e., collaboration member roles) and who decides what (i.e., collaboration member responsibilities) have to be closely linked to the evaluation scope. This fosters a group dialogue of openness and exploration that continues among the collaboration members even outside of formal meetings.

Limitations

There were limitations related to this collaborative effort that warrant discussion. Two of the limitations were related to the sampling of this study. The sample selected was limited to Black males enrolled in only one four-year university in the southern region of the United States. Also, the sample was relatively small having only 146 respondents, who reported being from majority two parent homes (n=82) with average family income of \$60,000-\$69,999. Therefore, the findings in this evaluation are not intended to generalize to the entire population of Black male students.

Another limitation of this evaluation is that the data collected were primarily self-reported, as well as retrospective, given that respondents were asked to recall information from their past experiences. It included no verifiable measures regarding the honesty or correctness of the respondents' answers. Hence, the limitation with using only a survey instrument with no cross-referencing as respondents could be influenced by a social desirability response set or otherwise answer questions falsely.

Table I:- Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliabilities.

| Parent Involvement Variables | Mean | Std Dev | Skewness | Kurtosis | Alpha |
|--|------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| Family obligation | 2.4 | 0.73 | -0.179 | -0.871 | |
| <i>A. My parent(s) involvement in parent-teacher organization/association activities</i> | 1.79 | 0.78 | 0.778 | -0.345 | 0.76 |
| <i>B. My parent(s) attendance at school programs about my future planning</i> | 2.41 | 1.09 | 0.057 | -1.379 | 0.88 |
| <i>C. My parent(s) had discussions with me about school topics</i> | 2.99 | 0.9 | -0.69 | -0.551 | 0.88 |

| Parent Involvement Variables | Mean | Std Dev | Skewness | Kurtosis | Alpha |
|--|------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| Parent information network | 2.37 | 0.7 | 0.153 | -0.501 | |
| <i>A. My parent(s) made contact with school about my performance</i> | 2.33 | 1.05 | 0.123 | -1.249 | 0.9 |
| <i>B. My parent(s) made contact with school about my behavior</i> | 1.81 | 1.13 | 1.036 | -0.553 | 0.92 |
| <i>C. My parent(s) knowledge of my schoolwork</i> | 2.99 | 0.96 | -0.605 | -0.797 | 0.89 |
| <i>D. My parent(s) knowledge of my friend's parents</i> | 2.34 | 0.99 | 0.359 | -1.076 | 0.9 |

| Parent Involvement Variables | Mean | Std Dev | Skewness | Kurtosis | Alpha |
|--|------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| Family norms | 3.21 | 0.44 | -0.802 | 1.107 | |
| <i>A. Family rules</i> | 2.62 | 0.79 | -0.108 | -0.766 | 0.69 |
| <i>B. Parent-teenager relationship</i> | 3.66 | 0.47 | -1.598 | 2.257 | 0.68 |
| <i>C. Educational expectations</i> | 3.35 | 0.58 | -0.832 | 0.17 | 0.69 |

Recommendations for Future Research:-

The central purpose of this collaborative evaluation was to identify the distribution of perceived parent involvement during high school across Black male students in a four-year college. While the quantitative data revealed perceived parent involvement factors, a follow-up qualitative study should be employed that explores the parental involvement during high school from the perspective of Black male students enrolled in a four-year college. Other studies may also include: repeating this study with Black male students in high school with a larger sample size, or with Black males in another country in hopes of comparing the findings. In addition, evaluations could be conducted using the MCE to transform evaluations of School based Parent Involvement programs.

It is important to note that the MCE was able to enhance the quality of the evaluation by establishing an open and shared evaluation environment while attending to the intended and unintended effects of the collaborative relationships. This model helped to understand and account for the nature of the work and the full range of stakeholders in the collaborative evaluation process. Hence, this model provided an increased shared ownership that also led to an increased quality of information for decision-making and receptivity of the findings. Based on these findings and previous evaluation experiences, a well-developed collaborative evaluation can lead to better questions, solutions, and results.

Conclusion:-

Over the years, researchers have determined that parental involvement has a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Deplanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Feuerstein, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). The concept of parental involvement is cultural based and multi-dimensional including both school and parents.

In order to carefully explore and conceptualize parent involvement, it was important to examine core predictor components that made up this multi-dimensional concept. Additionally, it was important to assess parent involvement from the students' perspective. Hence, the distribution of Black male students' perception of parent involvement during high school was analyzed.

The results of this collaborative effort revealed that Family norms were perceived as the most prevalent parent involvement subscale factor during high school for this population. Under the Family Norm factor subscale “Parent-teenager relationship” emerged as the most dominant variable, followed by “Educational expectations.” According to the collaboration members in this evaluation, parents predominantly demonstrated their involvement during high school by establishing rules and structure, having educational expectations while remaining connected and nurturing. It must also be noted that the lowest perceived activity of parent involvement for this population was that of parent(s) involvement in parent-teacher organization/association activities.

Identifying these factors would be useful toward improving graduation rates among Black males. Also, information gathered would assist in further development of effective parent involvement school programming initiatives specific for this population. Hence, this collaborative effort highlighted and added to the knowledge relevant to successful Black males’ perceptions of parental involvement factors during their high school years. Specifically, the use of the MCE transformed the evaluation into a joint responsibility process between the evaluators and key stakeholders.

The MCE helped to understand and account for the nature of the work and the full range of stakeholders in the collaborative evaluation process. This model provided an increased shared ownership that also led to an increased quality of information for decision-making and receptivity of findings. Thus, this evaluation enhanced the likelihood that its findings will be used, providing an important basis for transforming evaluations of School based Parent Involvement programs to assure quality inclusive initiatives.

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