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Parent Expectations Linked to Parent Satisfaction in a Summer Enrichment Program Evaluation

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**PARENT EXPECTATIONS LINKED TO PARENT SATISFACTION IN A
SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**A Program Evaluation submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University**

**In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist**

School Psychology

**by
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Approved by

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**Marshall University
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“Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.” -F. Scott Fitzgerald

First and foremost I would thank God. He has a plan and everything works out for the best when we accept this plan, even if we do not like it.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if parent expectations were a determining factor in the level of satisfaction of the parents of students who attended the Marshall University Graduate College Summer Enrichment Program of 2011.

Data of parent satisfaction was collected using a revised survey based off of parent satisfaction surveys from previous years while parent expectation data was collected from applications completed by parents prior to the start of the program.

Analysis using independent samples t-test determined parental expectations was not a predictor of parent satisfaction. Further exploration of the data indicated the most common expectations were reading and math expectations. A second analysis determined that parental expectations specifically in the areas of reading and math were also not a predictor of parental satisfaction.

CHAPTER I

Review of Literature

The present study examines parent satisfaction levels and how they are related to parent expectations upon student completion of the Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program (MUSEP). The study will determine if parents who had academic or behavioral expectations for their child are more or less satisfied than those parents who did not indicate any expectations. The study also examines if the parents who did indicate academic expectations are more or less satisfied than those parents who indicated behavioral expectations.

It is not uncommon for parent satisfaction to be a measurement tool when evaluating educational programs. However, there is a limited amount of research examining the relationship between student outcomes and parent satisfaction. Even less literature has been found regarding parental expectations of behavior and academics and their link to parent satisfaction. It has been found that parental expectations seem to vary based on a student's performance level, which has an effect on parental satisfaction (Davis-Kean 2005).

Program Evaluation

Educating school children, training employees, reducing crime, stimulating economic growth, and reducing drug abuse are a few areas where programs have been put in place to confront concerns and improve positive outcomes. As budgets get smaller and demands for improvement get larger, administrators and program managers have been forced to take a closer look at the effectiveness of their programs by evaluating their outcomes (Fitzpatrick, Worthen & Sanders, p.2004). While there are many different

definitions of what an evaluation is, it has been agreed that, “evaluation is determining the worth or merit of an evaluation object (whatever is evaluated)” (Fitzpatrick, et al., p.5). With this definition in mind, it is understandable that a program evaluation would be an appropriate step in deciding whether or not a program is yielding enough of a positive effect to stay in place.

The literature shows that evaluation is an essential piece of a successful program. The literature also supports the idea that program evaluation enables stakeholders to not only choose specific aspects of a program to evaluate, but also the clients from who they want information. This option allows evaluators to get detailed information that will give administrators the ability to make appropriate changes to programs to make them most effective (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2004).

Program Evaluation in Education

The realization of the value of program evaluations within an educational setting is on the rise. Mandates set forth by state and federal government require schools to provide accountability and data driven practices for students. In addition to this, administrators are being forced to determine program and staff cutbacks due to shrinking budgets. Because program evaluations have proved to provide answers to specific questions asked by stakeholders, they are particularly useful in educational settings (Thomas & Grimes, 2008).

Different variables are used to evaluate programs in education systems. In some cases, teachers, parents, students, or other stakeholder views, experiences, and opinions are used to evaluate a program. In 2010, Durmuscelebi, completed a study where results were used to help administrations gain valuable information regarding a newly

implemented education program by using teacher surveys.

Student surveys and interviews are also used as means to evaluate programs in education. Because students are the main focus of educational programs, it is important to understand their views on programs in order for these programs to be most effective (Fitzpatrick, et al.).

In 2011, Weinberg, Basile, and Albright, completed a study that explored middle school student motivation toward a mathematics and science summer enrichment program. In this study, students were given identical questionnaires and interviews before and after the program. The information gathered provided data regarding the student's interest in math and science, cost value, and attainment value at the beginning and completion of the summer program.

Results of the evaluations and interviews indicated that students were more motivated to learn math and science and felt they had made positive relationships with other students at the completion of the program. The data also revealed that many students felt as though the accessibility (cost and location) of the program was not convenient. This information provided administrators to look into ways to increase funding and cut the cost for the students as well as seek out new and additional locations for future programs.

It is clear that program evaluation is valuable to educational programs. It provides administrators with information that can help improve various aspects of educational programs. Through program evaluation, administrators and other stakeholders are able to choose a specific group (i.e. teachers or students) and focus on a specific area of a program that needs changed or even eliminated. Program evaluation allows

administrators to ensure they are making the best decisions about their educational programs based on information provided to those invested in the programs (Fitzpatrick, et al.).

Parent Satisfaction as a Tool in Program Evaluation

Satisfaction is a term that can be complicated to define and measure (Schwartz & Baer, 1991). There are several reasons found in literature that allude to the importance of collecting parent satisfaction data when evaluating a program. According to Upshur (1991), programs can be improved or eliminated based on results of parent satisfaction. Another use for parent satisfaction data is to persuade other organizations of the effectiveness of a program.

Research by Gibb and Young completed in 1997 explores parent perceptions of their disabled junior high students who are placed in general education classrooms that were taught by a team of teachers. The outcome of this study showed that parents were more satisfied because their student's overall academics (including grades, motivation, and feeling of accomplishment) performance increased.

Since 2003, The Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program (MUSEP) has been evaluated using overall parental satisfaction as a measurement tool. Lattimore (2003) was the first to develop a likert-scale questionnaire which was used to determine the level of parent satisfaction. Results of the Lattimore study indicated that parents had a high level of overall satisfaction with the program. Also, the biggest predictor of parent satisfaction was the parent's perception of care for their child by the staff at the summer program. A positive relationship was found between perception of child's academic progress at the summer program and parent satisfaction. However, no indication of a significant relationship was found between parental satisfaction of the program and parental involvement in the program.

In 2005, Wartenburg revisited this study to see if the results could be replicated. Wartenburg's study, like the Lattimore study, also found there was no significant relationship between parent satisfaction and parent involvement in the program. The best single predictor of parent satisfaction of the Wartenburg study was different from the result of the Lattimore study where the level of care given by the staff was the best predictor. Wartenburg's results indicated that the best predictor of satisfaction was the parent's response to the survey item, "I would recommend the Summer Enrichment Program to other parents."

This study was followed up in 2006 (Pulliam, 2006). In addition to investigating the level of parent satisfaction with the summer program, Pulliam also investigated the level of parent satisfaction regarding their local school systems. The program evaluation outcome resulted in parents indicating more satisfaction with the summer program than with the local school their child attended. According to the Pulliam study, the best indicator of parent satisfaction was that their child was safe at the program. In contrast with the previous studies, this study found there was a significant relationship between parent involvement and parent satisfaction.

The most recent replication of this study was completed in 2009 (Legg, 2009) where four independent variables were analyzed to determine their significance. Results indicated that three out of the four variables were significant in regards to the best indicator of parent satisfaction. The insignificant variable was the level of academic progress the child had made. When this variable was removed from the analysis, levels of parental involvement accounted for 31% of the variance of overall satisfaction, satisfaction with staff accounted for 18% of the variance, and child receiving reading tutoring during the program accounted for 9% of the variance.

These studies have provided administrators and graduate students with valuable information about the design and operation of the Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program. It has given insight about various aspects of the program that will enable administrators to continue to change and improve the Summer Enrichment Program. These improvements not only ensure the student participants are getting the most out of the program, but also that the graduate students are gaining knowledge to improve their future practice as a professional in an educational setting.

Relationship between Expectations and Satisfaction

The above mentioned studies have explored the parental satisfaction of the Summer Enrichment Program and the variables leading to satisfaction. Another factor which needs explored is parental expectations. It needs to be determined whether greater expectations by parents impacts satisfaction. The literature shows inconsistent findings when evaluating whether expectations are linked to satisfaction. While some research shows no relationship between expectations and satisfaction, at times, when a person indicates a high level of expectation, they are more difficult to satisfy than a person who does not indicate expectations of outcomes (Dearing, Barrick & Derman, 2005 and Nilsson, Toksvig-Larsen & Roos, 2009).

In medical studies, patient expectations linked to satisfaction resulted in different outcomes. A study completed in 2009, indicated patients reporting general satisfaction on a postoperative questionnaire even though expectations stated on the preoperative questionnaire were not met (Nilsson, Toksvig-Larsen & Roos, 2009). In contrast, Dearing, et. al., 2005, completed a study indicating patients whose expectations were met were more satisfied than patients whose expectations were not met (Dearing, Barrick &

Derman, 2005).

Because the link between expectations and satisfaction with outcomes has shown differing results in the literature, it is unclear if expectation levels determine a client's level of satisfaction. However, research indicates that parent expectations of their children's academic and behavioral success (Wentzel, 1998, Davis-Kean 2005 and Mcleod & Kaiser, 2004).

A study conducted by Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson & Dixon (2006), discussed the self-fulfilling prophecy theory proposed by Robert K. Merton in 1949. This theory implies that a person will fulfill the expectation (high or low) they have for themselves. The authors went on to discuss research conducted in 1968 by Rosenthal and Jacobson that applied this concept to teachers. This study proposed that, "when teachers expected their students to do well they interacted with them in ways that led to their expectations being fulfilled" (Rosenthal & Jacobson p. 116). The outcome of the study was that the more the teachers expected out of students, the more likely it was the students would fulfill the expectations. Follow-up studies that were completed regarding expectations a person has for themselves as well as expectations a teacher has on a student's academic and behavioral performance were more common than studies regarding expectations of parents for student outcomes.

Studies regarding parental expectations of their children and their academic success, while fewer in number, yield similar outcomes. One study completed in 1998 concluded that, "parent expectations have been posited as affecting student outcomes both directly through interactions with their children and indirectly through parental beliefs and perceived efficacy in providing academic support to their children" (Wentzel,

1998 p. 27). Results of another study completed in 2005 examined 8 to 12-year-old children and the expectations their parents have for their academic success. The results were consistent with other studies by concluding that parental expectations had a direct significant effect on academic achievement for students (Davis-Kean 2005).

The impact of parental expectations of their child's behavior is similar to that indicated by studies focusing on academic expectations. Mcleod & Kaiser, (2004) determined that not only do a parent's expectations of a student's behavior play a direct role in how the child behaves, but a child's behavior also has an effect on their parent's expectations of them. "Observed behavioral problems may lower parental appraisals of the child's ability to succeed in an academic environment" (Mcleod & Kaiser, 2004, pg 642). This study went on to explain that even with adequate academic performance, a child's negative behaviors might produce negative parental expectations.

Clearly, the research provides evidence of an association between parental expectations of academic and behavioral success and student outcomes. The level of expectation a parent has for their child's academic and behavioral success correlates with the level of success the child achieves. Yet, no studies have been found linking parental expectations to parental satisfaction. I could be assumed that if increased expectations yield higher academic success and academic success leads to parent satisfaction that there is a relationship between parental expectations and parent satisfaction.

Statement of Hypothesis

Hypothesis one: there is a relationship between parental expectations and parental satisfaction. Null Hypothesis one: There is no relationship between parental expectations and parental satisfaction.

Hypothesis two: there is a relationship between the most frequently reported parental expectations and parental satisfaction. Null Hypothesis two: There is no relationship between the most frequently reported parental expectations and parental satisfaction.

CHAPTER II

Method

Program Description

Marshall University Graduate College is located in South Charleston, West Virginia. The graduate college conducts a 5-week (19 instructional days) enrichment program in the summer that takes place Monday thru Thursday from 7:30 am – 12:30 pm. This program is offered to students ranging in age from K-8th grade and to students of all ability levels. The classrooms are made up of multi-ages, multi-ability, and special needs students.

Students participating in the summer enrichment program are given the opportunity to receive additional services including psychoeducational assessment and individual and group therapy. Before any student participates in any of these supplemental services, parental permission is obtained. Data is collected on the student's academic and behavioral progress using curriculum based assessments (CBA's) throughout the program. This data is used to monitor a student's progress and provide the graduate students with information to guide instruction and provide intervention.

The summer enrichment program enables graduate students from multiple disciplines the opportunity to gain direct experience required to gain certification or licensure in the areas of Educational Leadership, Special Education, Counseling, School Psychology, or Reading. The graduate students are urged to provide the students with an activity-based curriculum while collaborating with one another to provide the instruction possible for each individual student. The multidisciplinary graduate students are placed into approximately 8-9 member teams per classroom. The program's faculty members

include: a director, site principal, and field supervisors (Special Education, Counseling, School Psychology, and Reading) (Krieg, Meikamp, O'Keefe, & Stroebel 2006).

Participants

There were a total of 143 parents of students who attended the 2011 MUSEP and a total of 99 (69%) parents who participated in completing the parent satisfaction surveys. The students who participated in the MUSEP ranged in age from Kindergarten through middle school and were diverse when considering ethnicity, socio-economic status, medical conditions, and ability levels.

Instruments

A 22-item survey instrument including 18 questions areas rated on a 5-point Likert scale, two multiple-choice questions, and one open-ended question was used to collect and measure parent satisfaction data (Appendix A). This survey was adapted from the survey originally used in the Lattimore study (Lattimore, 2003), the Wartenburg study (Wartenburg, 2005), and again in the Legg study (Legg, 2009), to include new questions pertaining to new studies.

A Cronbach's Alpha result of .928 indicated a reliable measure and strong internal consistency of the dependent variable.

Procedure

A survey was emailed to parents of students participating in the summer enrichment program along with a letter explaining the purpose of the survey on August 10, 2011 via Survey Monkey. A confidentiality disclosure was included in the email.

A follow-up email was sent as a reminder to complete the survey on August 27, 2011. Due to minimal response, the graduate student research group which was made up of 5

graduate students, divided the list of parents and called each parent to obtain answers for the survey. A script was developed by the researchers and was used in each phone call (Appendix B). Consent was attained by voluntary participation and parent responses were entered into Survey Monkey by the researchers.

Information regarding parental expectations was gathered before the MUSEP began. Parents who were enrolling their students completed information forms (Appendix C) about their child's strengths and weaknesses as well as what parents hoped students would gain (expectations) from participating in the MUSEP.

CHAPTER III

Results

Overall satisfaction of the program was determined by grouping questions 1-15 on the parent satisfaction survey which served as the dependent variable. The independent variable was defined as parents who did or did not have expectations for their child at the beginning of the program.

Dependent Measure

At the end of the 2011 summer enrichment program, a total of 99 parent satisfaction surveys were completed. The sum of scores from questions used to determine the dependent variable, parental satisfaction, indicated a range of 15-75. A mean of 65.0 indicated strong overall parent satisfaction for the 2011 summer enrichment program.

Independent Measure

Results did not support hypothesis one and indicated there was no relationship between parental expectations and parental satisfaction. To determine this, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the mean score of the parents having prior expectations to the mean score of parents who did not have prior expectations. No significant difference was found. The mean of the parents with no expectations ($m = 66.35$, $sd = 7.94$) was not significantly different from the mean of the parents with expectations ($m = 63.66$, $sd = 10.40$).

Further analysis of the data indicated that the majority of parental expectations were for reading and math (69%). Other expectations reported were no expectations (20%), behavioral expectations (7%), and behavioral, reading, and math expectations (4%). Results also did not support hypothesis two and indicated there was no relationship

between the most frequently reported expectations (reading and math) and parental satisfaction. An independent samples t-test determined there was no significant difference in the means of parents who had math and reading expectations ($m = 63.35$, $sd = 10.50$) and the parents who did not have math and reading expectations ($m = 66.06$, $sd = 8.58$).

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine if there was a relationship between parental expectations and parental satisfaction of the MUSEP. Similar to previous program evaluations, a high level of overall parent satisfaction with the program was indicated.

Parent expectations of behavior and academics as defined in the independent measure were not found to be a significant factor regarding parental satisfaction. Further exploration of data indicated parental expectations of reading and math were reported most frequently (69% of the time). Results determined there was not a significant relationship between expectations in reading and math and parental satisfaction.

A post hoc analysis determined that parental expectations were not an indicator of students completing the program. Further analysis of the data indicated no significant relationship between parents who responded to the satisfaction survey by phone or email and their level of satisfaction.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was found on questions where the completer was asked to “check all that apply” (questions 19, 20 & 21). By asking a completer to “check all that apply,” the variables in the question become dependent on one another. To prevent this in future replications of this study, the variables should be separated into their own question.

Another limitation of the study is the difference in the way the parental satisfaction surveys were completed. Some of the surveys were completed by email

within the first eight weeks after the program ended while others were completed by phone 3-4 months after the conclusion of the program. Eliminating multiple forms of survey completion and the time lags between the conclusion of the program and parents completing the survey may result in more valid satisfaction outcomes. Yet when a comparison was made between the e-mail group and the phone group, there were no differences on parent satisfaction.

Recommendations for Future Evaluations of the MUGC Summer Program

This study indicated that there was not a significant relationship between behavioral and academic expectations of parents and whether or not the parent was satisfied with the MUSEP. Identifying the areas of instruction and support offered by the MUSEP, would enable parents of participating students to have a better concept of what type of expectations they could have for the program. This might then shape expectations of parents.

Advertising for the MUSEP currently emphasizes literacy as a focus of the program. While students are instructed in literacy, they also receive math and writing instruction as well as lessons in developmental guidance. Students are also given the opportunity to receive behavioral supports through individual, small group, and class wide behavior plans. Also, individual and small group counseling is offered to support students with any difficulties they are having socially or personally. More advertising for these aspects of the program, in addition to literacy, is recommended.

It is suggested for future evaluations of the MUGC summer program that additional questions be added to the student application that is completed prior to the commencement of the program (Appendix C). These questions should ask the parent if

they have expectations for their child in a specific area instead of the current question which asks, “What would you like your child to accomplish this summer”. While this question has yielded many responses in the past, it does not inform the parent of the specific areas where the child has the opportunity to make improvements. The new questions used to replace the existing question should be separate in order to avoid each variable (each area of expectation) becoming dependent on one another. For example, the questions should resemble the following format:

Do you expect your child to improve his/her behavior over the summer?	Yes or No
Do you expect your child to improve his/her reading skills over the summer?	Yes or No
Do you expect your child to improve his/her math skills over the summer?	Yes or No
Do you expect your child to improve his/her social skills over the summer?	Yes or No

These changes would allow the parent who is completing the application form to be more informed about the specific services their child will have the opportunity to access over the summer. The questions will also enable parents to make a more accurate indication of the areas where they have expectations for their child. This information will be valuable to future program evaluations as there will be more variables to investigate regarding parent satisfaction.

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Appendix A

Summer 2011 Enrichment Program
Parent Survey

Please circle your responses to the following questions. All responses will remain confidential and your effort is greatly appreciated.

1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=neutral 4=agree 5=strongly agree

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. My child enjoyed participating in the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. I am pleased with how staff worked with my child during the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. My child was safe at school. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. The staff in the program truly cared about my child. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. The staff took prompt action when problems occurred. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Staff were willing to talk to me if I had any concerns/suggestions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. My child's teachers seemed to make learning exciting and fun. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. My child has benefited from the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9. My child has improved his/her ability to get along with other children. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. I noticed an improvement in my child's behavior. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. My child improved in reading skills during the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. My child improved in math skills during the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. I am satisfied with the program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. I would like my child to attend the Summer Enrichment Program again. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. I would recommend the Summer Enrichment Program to other parents. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. As a parent I felt I was involved in my child's program. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. I was aware of the parent training sessions. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. The parent training sessions were helpful. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. I participated in the following... (check all that apply) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Training Sessions | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting with staff about the problem/issue I am having with my child | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Conference to review my child's Psychological Evaluation | |
| 20. I found the following services to be helpful... (check all that apply) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Training Sessions | |

- Meeting with staff about the problem/issue I am having with my child
- Parent Conference to review my child's Psychological Evaluation

21. My child did not complete (attended 5 or less days) the program because... (check all that apply)

- I was dissatisfied with the program/ the program did not meet my expectations
- I had too many other obligations/commitments
- My child refused to return
- The location was problematic
- Other: Please explain reason

22. In order to improve the program, I would suggest:

Appendix B

Summer 2011 Enrichment Program Parent Survey Phone Call Script

My name is_____ I am a Marshall University Graduate student, your child participated in our summer enrichment program. Have you received any emails regarding a program satisfaction survey? (Have you had a chance to complete the online survey?) We would love your feedback on our program; let's take about 5 or 10 minutes to complete the parent's satisfaction survey. Your responses will be treated in a confidential manner; your name will not appear on the survey

***If you have more than one child who attended the program you will need to complete a survey for each child. Please keep in mind each child individually.

Your time and thoughtful consideration are very much appreciated. This information will be very valuable in providing feedback as well as assisting with program improvement.

Appendix C

Marshall University Summer Enrichment Program 2011
Student Information Form

TEAM NUMBER:

Student's Last Name?

Student's Last, First Name?

Name of person completing this form and relationship to student?

My child enjoys the following hobbies:

What does your child like to do in his/her free time?

What does your child like most about school?

What does your child like least about school?

My child is really good at?

My child needs some extra help with?

In the classroom my child behaves?

What is the reason your child behaves this way?

Three words that describe my child are?

My child needs some extra help with?

What areas would you like to see your child improve on in school?

What would you like your child to accomplish this summer?

Did your child have a Behavior Management Plan at school? If so please explain.

How many days of school did your child miss this year?

What is your child's favorite book?

What does your child like to read about?

Figure 1

