

Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training

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ABSTRACT

Puberty is often experienced by adolescents in relation to psychological changes, including letting go of dependence on parents to achieve greater independence. Adolescents begin to spend more time with their friends, and share less information with their parents. However, support and direction from parents are still needed by adolescents, considering that they will grow into adults with all the complexity of their problems. So parents need to understand the changes that adolescents are experiencing, and how to assist adolescents in dealing with these changes. "Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" is aimed to increase parents' understanding of the characteristics of adolescent development and how to communicate with adolescents. The training was conducted through three stages, preparation, implementation, and follow-up. There were 38 parents who have children aged 12-23 years attended training. The training was held face-to-face on Saturday, July 29, 2023, at Madrasah Thosin Cikopo, Cipacing Village, Jatinangor District. "Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" was considered fun and useful by parents who have teenage children. The parents were satisfied with the material provided, which was in accordance with their needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The adolescent period is a crucial phase in life marked by multidimensional and multi-directional changes across various functional domains. Adolescents undergo significant transformations in all aspects of development, including biological, psychological, and social dimensions (Santrock, 2014). Biologically, the most prominent change is puberty, which entails various physiological and physical alterations. These changes often coincide with developmental shifts that largely affect the parent-teen relationship, such as shifts in conversation topics and a more emotionally charged connection between parents and adolescents (Soenens et al., 2019).

Some teenagers are open about the changes they're going through and rely on their parents for advice, information, and comfort. However, others are more reserved and tend not to share the changes they're experiencing with their parents (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1982). Parents also differ in

how they respond to the changes in their teenagers. Some parents respond sensitively and provide accurate information and support, while others may feel uncomfortable discussing these topics and struggle to accept their teenagers' lack of openness (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Yet, how parents and teenagers communicate during puberty significantly impacts the level of tension in their relationship and influences problematic teenage behavior. Poor-quality parental communication can exacerbate vulnerability to emotional stress (such as depressive symptoms) and risky behaviors (such as skipping school and alcohol use) (Booth et al., 2003).

Puberty is often associated with emotional and hormonal changes in a child. Adolescents are vulnerable to experiencing negative emotions and displaying emotional instability, especially during early adolescence. Alongside these changes, teenagers also undergo developments in emotion regulation, although they are still limited (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014). Parents continue to play a crucial role, both as role models and as active coaches in how teenagers respond to their emotions. The way parents express and manage their emotions can serve as a direct example for teenagers (Bariola et al., 2011). Adolescents whose parents struggle with emotion regulation report more difficulties in managing their own emotions and are more likely to engage in problematic behaviors (Buckholdt et al., 2014). Parents who can pay attention to and accept their teenager's emotions, while offering appropriate guidance in handling emotions, contribute positively to emotional development, well-being, and resilience in the face of stress and behavioral issues in teenagers (Soenens et al., 2019).

Psychological changes during adolescence are closely linked to autonomy and individuation from parents. Adolescents gradually release their dependence on parents to achieve greater independence. This is necessary for exploring the social world, forming peer relationships, and developing a healthy sense of confidence. However, the drive for autonomy often outpaces the development of self-regulation in adolescents (Branje, 2018). This necessitates that parents grant autonomy to their teenagers while also setting certain boundaries.

Adolescents also undergo a development of abstract reasoning that fosters a more reciprocal and egalitarian view of their relationship with parents (Branje, 2018). This development facilitates the reorganization of the parent-teen relationship from a vertical one, where parents previously held more knowledge and social power than their children, and were expected to provide a sense of security and warmth, into a more horizontal relationship characterized by equality, symmetry, and mutual interaction. Adolescents tend to view issues that were once under their parents' jurisdiction as personal decisions. This is also related to their increasing need for autonomy. Parents need to accommodate these changes (Branje et al., 2012), but they still need to provide guidance to their teenagers (Abidin et al., 2021). Therefore, parents and teenagers need to communicate to find a balance between adolescent autonomy and parental guidance (Branje, 2018).

Social changes are associated with the widening social circle of children. Adolescents begin to spend more time with their friends and share less information with their parents. They often turn to their friends to express experiences and seek support and advice, making experiences with friends more influential on self-evaluation, self-esteem, self-confidence, and well-being (Sebastian et al., 2010). However, parents still play a significant role in the lives of adolescents (Abidin et al., 2021). Parents and friends each have unique roles, especially in different aspects of life. Friends have a strong influence on lifestyle choices, such as clothing preferences and music, while parents remain important sources of influence in academics.

The changes experienced by adolescents lead them to confront new and unique developmental tasks, with parents playing a crucial role in guiding them through these challenges (Soenens et al., 2019). Adolescents still need the attention, support, and guidance of their parents, as they are growing into

Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training

Efi Fitriana, Syipa Husni Fadillah, Fitri Ariyanti Abidin

complex individuals (Abidin et al., 2021; De Jonge et al., 2022). Therefore, parents need to understand the changes adolescents are going through and how to support them during these changes. The “Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training” is designed to enhance parents’ understanding of adolescent development characteristics and how to communicate with teenagers effectively.

2. METHODS

The “Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training” consists of three stages: preparation, implementation, and follow-up.

Preparation Phase

During the preparation phase, several activities are carried out to support the training, including situation analysis, the selection of training location and participants, and the preparation of training materials. Firstly, a situation analysis is conducted through interviews with the neighborhood head (RT) leader and parents of adolescents living in RW 03, Cipacing Village, Jatinangor, Sumedang. These interviews aim to gather information on the number of parents with adolescents, parents’ perspectives on adolescence, and their parenting practices. The interview results serve as a basis for determining the training content. Secondly, the neighborhood head assists in choosing a training location that is easily accessible for the prospective participants’ parents. Lastly, the preparation of training materials includes items such as content materials, a program schedule (Table 1), invitations, entry tickets, pre-test, post-test, feedback questionnaires, goodie bags, refreshments, promotional items, and door prizes.

Table 1. The “Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training”

Time	Duration (Minutes)	Activity
8.30 – 9.00	30’	Registration
9.00 – 9.10	10’	Conditioning
9.10 – 9.15	5’	Speech from the head of the team
9.15 – 19.20	5’	Speech from the head of Village Head (Kepala Desa)
9.20 – 9.35	15’	Pre-test
9.35 – 9.45	10’	Ice breaking
9.45 – 11.15	90’	Session 1 : Adolescents’ Characteristics
11.15 – 11.35	20’	Post-test 1 & pre-test 2
11.35 – 11.45	10’	Doorprize
11.45 – 12.30	45’	Break
12.30 – 12.45	15’	Ice breaking
12.45 – 14.15	90’	Session 2: Communicating with adolescents
14.15 – 14.30	20’	Post-test 2
14.30 – 14.40	10’	Doorprize
14.40 – 14.45	5’	Closing

The pre-test and post-test questionnaires consist of true-false questions, specifically six questions related to adolescent development and four questions about communicating with adolescents. Parents are asked to evaluate the accuracy of the statements provided. These statements include: (1) Session 1: Adolescents’ Characteristics, about: (a) True/False: Adolescents can get pregnant if they engage in sexual

intercourse; (b) True/False: Adolescents don't need to be told how to shave their pubic hair; (c) True/False: Adolescents can already take care of themselves; (d) True/False: Adolescents begin to sleep later at night due to hormonal influences; (e) True/False: Adolescents will always choose their friends over their parents; (f) True/False: Adolescents need to be informed about how to protect themselves from internet dangers; (2) Session 2: Communicating with adolescents, about: (a) True/False: Adolescents no longer need to be loved by their parents; (b) True/False: Adolescents can be engaged in discussions; (c) True/False: Adolescents don't feel the need to be informed by their parents; (d) True/False: Adolescents don't want to engage in activities with their parents.

The feedback questionnaire includes questions about parents' satisfaction with the material presented, the relevance of the material to their own circumstances, and their understanding of the material presented. These questions are also given to the participants.

Implementation Phase

The "Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" is conducted face-to-face and consists of 2 sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. Session 1 covers adolescent development, including physical, psychological, and social changes, while Session 2 focuses on how to communicate with adolescents. The material is delivered interactively in a large classroom by Dr. Fitri Ariyanti Abidin, M.Psi., a psychologist with over 15 years of experience in working with adolescents and providing psychoeducation to parent communities. Parents are encouraged to actively participate by expressing their opinions on the topics being discussed. They are also given the opportunity to ask questions if there are any aspects that are unclear or confusing.

Each session begins with an icebreaker to break the ice and the distribution of a pre-test questionnaire to assess parents' initial understanding of the material to be presented. At the end of the session, door prizes are distributed, and a post-test questionnaire is given to determine parents' understanding after completing the training. Additionally, parents are requested to fill out a feedback questionnaire regarding the training activities at the end of the program.

Follow-Up Phase

During this phase, an evaluation of the conducted training is performed. The training evaluation encompasses two aspects: "evaluation of reaction" and "evaluation of learning." "Evaluation of Reaction" involves analyzing the feedback questionnaire results provided by the parents. The outcomes of these questionnaires are expressed as percentages for each aspect. The higher the satisfaction percentage obtained, the better the quality of the training conducted. On the other hand, "Evaluation of Learning" involves comparing the results of the pre-test and post-test assessments conducted with the parents. By comparing these two outcomes, we can assess the extent to which parents' understanding has improved after participating in the training.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The "Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" was conducted face-to-face on Saturday, July 29, 2023, from 8:30 AM to 2:45 PM local time at Madrasah Thosin Cikopo, Cipacing Village, Jatinangor District. The training was attended by 38 parents with children aged 12-23 years. Demographic data of the parents who participated in this training is presented in Table 2.

Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training

Efi Fitriana, Syipa Husni Fadillah, Fitri Ariyanti Abidin



Figure 1. Documentation of Implementation Phase: (1) Preparation before sessions; (2) Registration before sessions; (3) Pre-test before session; (4) Speech from the representative of Program Supervisor; (5) Ice breaking before the training; (6) Session 1 : Adolescents' Characteristics; (7) Interactive Methods during session 1 delivery; (8) Doorprize Session-1 after Sesion 1; (9) Ice breaking before Session 2; (10) Session-2: Communicating with adolescents; (11) Preparation of role-play in Session 2; (12) Post-test and feedback

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Mean	Standar Deviation	Range	n	Percentage
Age	44.88	6.58	31-60		
Educational Background					
Elementary School				4	11
Junior High School				11	29
Senior High School				18	47
Diploma				4	11
Bachelor's Degree				1	3
Working Status					
Unemployed				34	89
Employed				4	11
Number of Children	2.39	0.92	1-5		
Age of the Eldest Child	20.75	4.93	12-30		
Age of the Youngest Child	10.72	5.67	3-23		

The training activities commence with an icebreaker to break the ice and create a relaxed atmosphere. Parents actively participate in and appear to enjoy this icebreaking activity, which makes them ready to receive the material that will be presented. The material is delivered interactively, with parents encouraged to actively voice their opinions to keep it engaging. The presentation of the material is also connected to real-life, concrete activities so that parents can easily understand the content being delivered.

At the end of the session, parents were asked to fill out a feedback questionnaire to evaluate the training. The results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Parent satisfaction percentage with the training (n = 26)

Elements of Satisfaction	Percentage
Material	88
Relevance of the material to participants' needs	96
Understanding of the material	85

Table 3 indicates that overall, participants are satisfied with the "Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training". Participants are satisfied with the provided materials, which they find relevant to their needs, and they are able to understand them. The topics of interest include adolescent development and the appropriate parenting approach for adolescents.

Pre-tests and post-tests were also conducted to determine the success of this training in enhancing parents' understanding of adolescent development and communication with adolescents. The pre-test questionnaire was completed by 38 parents, while the post-test questionnaire was only filled out by 26 parents, with only 17 parents who could be identified as having completed both the pre-test and post-test questionnaires. The results of the pre-test and post-test is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 show a slight increase in the mean score of parents' knowledge regarding communication with their adolescents after participating the training.

Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training

Efi Fitriana, Syipa Husni Fadillah, Fitri Ariyanti Abidin

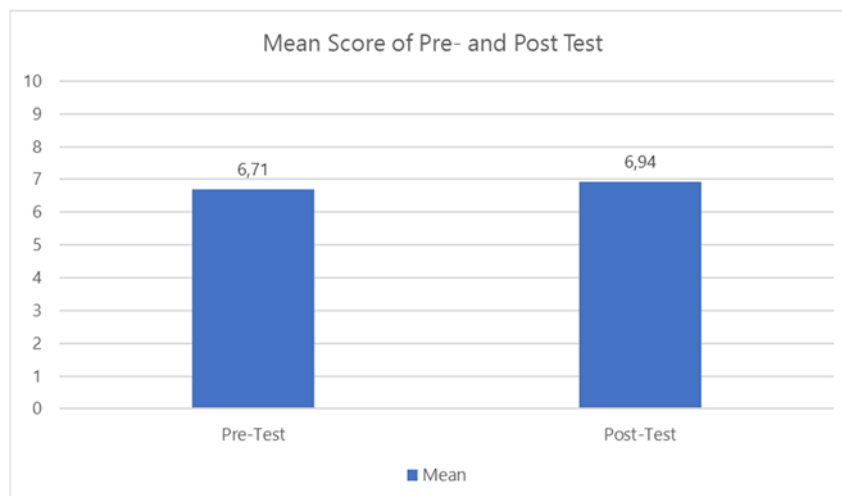


Figure 2. Mean Score of Pre-and Post Test

Discussion

"Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" aims to enhance parents' understanding of adolescent development characteristics and effective communication with teenagers. Parents' comprehension of adolescent development can assist them in guiding their teenagers through the challenges they face. Parents can adapt their guidance to the specific developmental stages their teenagers are going through, which can improve the well-being of both parents and teenagers. The way parents and teenagers communicate can also impact their relationship, the susceptibility to emotional stress, and risky behaviors in teenagers (Booth et al., 2003).

This training has made a positive impression. Parents are satisfied with the provided material, which aligns with their needs and is accompanied by concrete examples, making it easily understandable for them. The delivery of the material is also interactive, allowing parents to actively express their opinions. Similarly, in the online psychoeducation about adolescent development conducted by Abidin et al. (2023), interactive psychoeducation is perceived as enjoyable and beneficial for parents.

This training shows initial evidence of enhancing parents' understanding of adolescent development. Through this training, parents can comprehend the changes that occur in teenagers, which can lead to changes in their behavior. Additionally, parents can learn how to support teenagers in navigating these changes. This aligns with the online workshop "Getting to Know My Teen" on adolescent development, determinants, and their implications on teenage behavior, which can improve parents' understanding of adolescent development and appropriate parenting approaches (Abidin et al., 2023).

Many parents still do not understand that adolescents are not yet fully capable of self-regulation and that adolescents will not always choose their friends over their parents. The imbalance in the development of the affective ventral system and prefrontal cortex in adolescents leads to slower self-regulation development compared to their drive for autonomy (Crone et al., 2016). Therefore, adolescents still require guidance, support, and attention from parents (Abidin et al., 2021; De Jonge et al., 2022). During this period, parents continue to be a significant source of support for adolescents. Adolescents need parental support when they have concerns about their competence, whether it's in academics, work, sports, or interpersonal relationships (De Jonge et al., 2022; Olsson et al., 2016). The needed support from parents includes comfort and problem-solving facilitation.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training" was considered fun and useful by parents who have teenage children. The posttest results show a slight increase in the mean score of parents' knowledge regarding communication with their adolescents after participating the training. Parents are content with the provided material, which aligns with their needs. This training also has the potential to enhance parents' understanding of adolescent development characteristics and their knowledge of how to communicate effectively with teenagers. Parents can comprehend the changes happening in their teenagers, especially in terms of physical changes, and understand how to support them.

However, when it comes to communicating with teenagers, parents still feel that teenagers need to be told what to do, and teenagers are not interested in engaging in activities with them. This feedback can be utilized for the development of future training, including: (1) Training for parents emphasizing that teenagers still require guidance from parents and providing concrete methods for offering support; (2) Training for parents emphasizing non-dictatorial communication with teenagers; (3) Increasing the allocation of time for Roleplay Methods, ensuring that each parent has the opportunity to engage in roleplay and receive feedback.

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Parenting Adolescents: Parent-Teen Communication Training

Efi Fitriana, Syipa Husni Fadillah, Fitri Ariyanti Abidin

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