The Effect of Parental Communication on the Belief System of Teenage Girls: A Case Study

Swati Shiradkar

ABSTRACT
Healthy development during adolescent age is very important. The major issue is experimentation to understand the base of thinking direction of this age group. The questions were given to participants in a workshop. The answers analyzed. Total 48 female students between age group 14 and 16 responded. Fifty percent wanted economical independence but 30% have it. Majority of those who wanted this independence felt that friendship between boys and girls is necessary and they found communication with parents difficult, shared feelings with friends. Improvement in communication between children and parents will help in solving issues about irresponsible behavior of the children.

Keywords: Economical independence, Behavior of teenagers, Communication.

How to cite this article: Shiradkar S. The Effect of Parental Communication on the Belief System of Teenage Girls: A Case Study. MGM J Med Sci 2014;1(2):95-98.

Source of support: Nil
Conflict of interest: None declared

INTRODUCTION
Since past decade awareness about adolescent health and psychological issues has increased worldwide. Studies show that most of the health related issues observed in adults have roots in their adolescent age. Healthy development during adolescent age contributes toward good mental health which helps to prevent psychological problems. Communication between parents and teenage children is the crucial factor that shapes child’s life toward adulthood. However, various changes that occur during adolescence interfere with effective communication between parents and children.

This paper presents the research based on the data that was collected during a workshop aimed at teenage girls between ages of 14 and 16 from various schools in Aurangabad, Maharashtra. A questionnaire was developed to aid in the collection of necessary data. The data obtained was statistically analyzed in order to understand trends in the parent-child interactions. This would help to identify important issues to focus on during a parenting workshop that was conducted at MGM Medical College at later point of time. This paper presents a discussion on trends observed in parent-teenager interactions and how it affects the behavior of teenagers.

RESEARCH METHODS
A workshop for teenage female students from different schools was conducted at Aurangabad, Maharashtra. At the end of the workshop, students were asked to fill out a survey form. The survey included questions about the opinion of subjects about issues, such as pocket money, friendship between girls and boys, type of family they desire (nuclear or joint), whether their mother should be a housewife or a working woman, etc. The questions were also aimed at getting information about the subject’s communication between family members and friends.

Forty-eight subjects from different schools that attended a workshop were selected for statistical analysis. In this way, random sampling of population was achieved. The data was analyzed using a statistical software. The purpose of the study and procedure of survey was explained to subjects. So, consent of each student was sought before they became part of this study.

Background of the Selected Student Population
All the female students selected for this research came from well educated families. These students were in 8th and 9th standard (ages 14-16). Participant students belonged to middle or upper middle class on socioeconomic scale.

STATISTICAL DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
Data obtained from 48 subjects was used as an input to determine trends between different variables. A mosaic plot is a powerful graphical tool which allows to examine relationship among two or more variables. Mosaic plot is basically a square with length one. The square is divided horizontally into bars whose widths are proportional to probabilities of first categorical variable. Then each bar is
vertically divided proportional to probabilities of second categorical variable.

The Figure 1 shows a mosaic plot between variables ‘should pocket money be given’ and ‘do you get pocket money’. The subjects who said ‘yes’ to the former question are represented by the blue area while those who answered ‘no’ are represented by the red area. It can be seen that the opinion about if the pocket money should be given is exactly 50% divided. However, only about 30% of the subjects actually received pocket money. Majority of the subjects who received pocket money agreed with the idea of pocket money. On the other hand, majority of subjects who did not like the idea of pocket money, did not get it. This indicates that the parental decision to offer pocket money to their teenagers is capable of shaping their opinion about the idea of pocket money. However, there are some external factors like interaction with friends that are seen to influence the subjects opinion about pocket money and therefore we have found non-negligible number of teenagers who agreed to the idea of pocket money eventhough they actually did not get it.

In order to further understand how various factors in parent-teenager interaction affect the teenager’s opinions, we have used the question ‘is friendship between girls and boys necessary’ as a pivotal variable. The two adjacent mosaic plots in Figure 2 show the distribution of variables ‘should pocket money be given’ and ‘do you get pocket money’ vs ‘is friendship between girls and boys necessary’. It is seen that 19% subjects believed that girl-boy friendship is not necessary, 25% were unsure and 56% answered yes. The horizontal axes of the mosaic plot are accordingly scaled. Interestingly, it is seen that as one moves from answers ‘no’ to ‘unsure’ to ‘yes’ to the girl-boy friendship question, the fraction of subjects who agreed to the idea of pocket money increases as 22.2, 41.7 and 63% respectively. Also, 89% of the subjects who felt it was not necessary to have friendship between girls and boys, actually did not get the pocket money. This indicates that as the idea of having friendship with people of opposite sex becomes more and more acceptable to the teenagers, they are more likely to have a positive opinion about pocket money (feeling the need to be in control of their finances).

Figure 3 shows the mosaic plot between the variable ‘do you have free communication with parents’ vs ‘is friendship between girls and boys necessary’. It is seen that 67% of the subjects had answered ‘yes’ to the question about free communication with parents while 14% were unsure, and 19% had actually said ‘no’. Interestingly, 89% of the subjects who did not feel that the friendship between girls and boys is necessary, had free communication with their parents. Additionally, no subject who had answered ‘no’ to the necessity of girl-boy friendship had admitted to having

![Fig. 1: Mosaic plot of variables ‘should pocket money be given’ vs ‘do you get pocket money’](image1)

![Fig. 2: Mosaic plot of variable ‘should pocket money be given’ vs ‘is friendship between girls and boys necessary (left)’](image2)
poor communication with parents. This clearly indicates that parents are playing a major role in shaping the teenagers’ beliefs about friendship with people of opposite sex. And especially when the teenager thinks that it is ‘not necessary’ to have a friendship with people of opposite sex, this opinion is largely formed from their interactions with their parents. However, about 51% of the subjects who answered yes to the girl-boy friendship question also admitted to having free communication with parents. This indicates that not all parents are discouraging their teenagers from developing friendship with the people of opposite sex.

Figure 4 shows the mosaic plot between the variable ‘Whom do you share your feelings with’ and ‘is friendship between girls and boys necessary’. It is seen that 41.7, 33.3, 20.8 and 4.2% subjects admitted to share their feelings with family members only, friends and family members, friends only and nobody, respectively. It is seen that as the subjects tend to share more and more of their feelings with friends, they tend to become open to the idea of having friendship between girls and boys. It should be noted that 4.2% of the subjects denied sharing feelings with anybody, but answered yes to the idea of having friendship between girls and boys. Also, as the subjects tend to share their feelings with family members only, their tendency to did not like the idea of girl-boy friendship or be unsure about it increases. This indicates that probably majority of the parents of these teenagers are not encouraging friendship between people of opposite sexes.

Other Findings

This section discusses some of the qualitative findings that were not addressed in the statistical analysis section. When asked if you would like your mother to be a housewife or working, 48% answered housewife, while 35% answered working, and the rest were unsure or answered both. Majority of the subjects who had answered housewife for their mother’s occupation gave a reason that having mother at home is helpful for them for emotional support and studies, also it creates less tensions at home. The subjects that answered they would like their mother to be a working woman, said so, because they feel proud, it would make her confident and explore new avenues.

When asked about what kind of family they would like, 50% answered joint family, 33% answered nuclear while 17% were unsure. The subjects that answered joint family pointed out the benefits of joint family, such as guidance from elders and joy of being together. The subjects that chose nuclear family was because of comfort, privacy and freedom.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This study helped to get an overview of how communication between parents and adolescents shapes thought process of adolescents. It was found that the opinion of teenagers about issues, such as friendship with opposite sex, pocket money, etc. is strongly determined by their interactions with parents. However, in order to understand trends in greater detail, the relevance and clarity of survey instrument (questionnaire) needs to be further improved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is thankful for the participants of this survey, MGM Medical College for the support and Sayli Bhide, University of Central Florida, USA, for the statistical analysis and help in preparation of this manuscript.
REFERENCES