A Study On High School Students’ Parents-Children Relationship

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I. Introduction

Parents-Children relationship has a great influence on everyone. In this paper, we focus on high school students’ parents-children relationship for high school students happen to be adolescence, which is a period of great transformation. Teenagers move from childhood to adulthood and they experience a great change not only physically but mentally as well. Thus, we are eager to know how the teenagers feel about their parents-children relationship and we try to explore some kinds of methods that make each other become closer.

1. Adolescence

A. The Definition of Adolescence

Adolescence is roughly considered to be a period of 11 to 17 years of age. According to Wikipedia, “adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and mental human development that occurs between childhood and adulthood. This transition involves biological, social, and psychological changes.”

B. The Characteristics of Adolescence

Teenagers are eager to be independent and they dislike parents’ intervening. They seek others’ identification and enjoy making friends and taking part in all kinds of peer activities. Thus, they are easily influence by fashion and friends; they follow what other peers do. Besides, they start to have an interest in the opposite sex. Therefore, they pay much attention to their appearance and dress up on every occasion. Also, they emphasize the impression they leave on others and other's opinions. They become more aggressive and emotional, which causes the conflicts between parents and them.

2. Modern Parents-Children Relationship

A. Little Time to Spend With Each Other

In the modern society, as a result of economic depression, parents are under great pressure. They have to work hard and make more money so that they can support the whole family. Thus, parents have less time to pay attention to their children, so most parents don’t understand what children think truly in their mind.

On the other hand, to enter an ideal school, children have to be more hard-working for their school work; they go to cram school or the library after school.

B. Different Viewpoints
Besides, there is always a generation gap between parents and children. Both sides have different points of views. For example, children may think of fast food as convenient and fashionable while parents may consider it junk food and believe the rice is the best for kids; children might prefer the TV programs about idols and gossips, but in parent's view, the program about nature and biology, such as *Discovery* and *Animal Planet* are fit for children. Furthermore, more and more children follow the fashion and are eager for something of the famous name brand; they need more and more money to meet their desire, and it may cause their father and mother get angry.

In addition, the modern society has many uncertain factors. Parents want to protect kids from everything that may have risks of insecurity while kids are eager to show their independence, not willing to follow parents’ advice.

C. Influence from Peers and Schoolwork

Peers and schoolwork affect parents-children relationship a lot. As the children grow little by little, they pay attention to people of their generation more and more. They like to be with classmates and friends; they chat, play and share the similar thoughts and interests with each other. They start to believe the one who understand them more is their friend, not parents.

School work may also lead to nervous parents-children relationship. Parents may require their children to get high grades and give children too much stress. While children fail to meet parents’ expectation, parents might call down kids, blaming the poor grades on kids’ idleness.

II. Thesis

We make a questionnaire to survey how the relationship between parents and children is. In order to know if the relationship between children and parents become more and more far as they grow, we polled off 50 junior high and 50 senior high school students respectively.

1. The Analysis of Our Questionnaire

Q1. Is your parents’ attitude toward you authoritative or democratic?
From the above chart, we can find that most parents treat kids democratically. Comparing the four groups, we can find that more junior high boy students feel their parents are authoritative, which may be due to the fact that junior high boys are under the period of adolescence. However, less senior high boy students feel parents are authoritative.

Q2. Who you live with now?

According to the graph, most students live with parents while some senior high students may have to live alone in the dormitory for the senior high they attend is far away from their parents’ house.

Q3. What activities do you usually do with your parents on holidays?
From the above two charts, we can know that the most frequent activity teenagers will do with their family is watching TV. Besides, senior high students are more likely to go shopping with families than junior high students. The reason might be because senior high students have more ideas of their own and they care about their appearance more.

Furthermore, senior high girls are fonder of going shopping than senior high boys while there is almost no difference between junior high boys and junior high girls in going shopping. What’s more, the percentage of watching show is very low, nearly zero, may be due to the fact that Miaoli is not a big city and that there are not too many shows performed in Miaoli.

Q4. Have you ever considered committing suicide?

There are indeed some students who have ever considered committing suicide, but the percentage is not too high. The reasons why they want to use killing themselves as a solution are about schoolwork, families and interpersonal relationship.

Committing suicide cannot help solve the problem, but why are there still quite a few students choosing to kill themselves when they get into trouble? Their parents play an important role. Parents’ attitude toward dealing with adversity and the way they teach their children might influence children a lot. Also, the messages from media have a great impact on children.
Q5. Do you think your parents show respect for you when they make a decision?

From the chart, we found that most of the students believe parents do treat them with respect when making a decision; the percentage is higher than 70%.

Q6. Do you think your parents will always satisfy your need?

Though parents will take children’s idea into consideration, the former do not always satisfy the latter’s desire. Interesting enough, parents tend to satisfy girls’ need than boys’. It seems that girls are more obedient so that parents are more willing to offer their daughters more. Besides, parents are inclined to supply younger kids with more. Perhaps it is because the older the kid is, the more desire he/she has; thus, parents are not capable of meeting all their teen-aged kids everything.

Q7. Do you think your parents have different attitude toward sons and daughters?
According to the above graph, most kids don’t think that parents have different attitude toward sons and daughters while more boys than girls believe parents treat sons and daughters equally.

Q8. Would you make a rational communication with your parents?

Communication plays an important part in dealing with different points of view. Good communication helps both children and parents understand what both think. In addition, conflict may be avoided if each can think in others’ shoes.

From the chart, we know most teenagers do not make a good communication with their parents while boys are worse than girls.

Q9. Do your parents ask you to come back home before an exact time?
From the chart, we can find parents tend to restrict girls more than boys and when kids grow older, parents will give them more freedom. Generally speaking, it is more dangerous for girls and young kids to stay out at night; parents will be more worried about daughters’ and younger kids’ safety.

According to our interview, parents are inclined to ask the children to come back home before nine o’clock. Miao-li is a small town and there are not too many activities for kids to join; thus, after nine o’clock the streets are covered with silence and darkness.

Q10. Do your parents limit the type of friends you make?

From the above chart, parents tend to limit their junior high kids more than their senior high kids. In general, parents hope their kids make friends with those well-behaved and with good schoolwork performance instead of those with bad habits and bad schoolwork performance. Parents are worried that the so-called “bad friends” will influence their kids and induce their kids to take up something bad. However, teenagers don’t follow whatever their parents say. They don’t regard parents’ standard or viewpoint as required.

According to McClure, kids might be drawn to smoking and chewing tobacco for any number of reasons — to look cool, act older, lose weight, win cool merchandise, seem tough, or feel independent. Peers have more impact on teenagers than parents. No wonder parents are so worried. Nevertheless, parents still can combat those draws and keep kids from trying and getting addicted to something bad.

Q11. How is the atmosphere in your family?
According to the chart, most of our interviewees look upon the atmosphere in their family as good and OK, which means that actually high school students get along with their parents.

2. How to Improve Parents-Children Relationship?

There are sure some ways to strengthen the parents-children relationship. According to McClure⁵, parents can teach their children about their faith and beliefs, tell children what they truly think, listen to children and answer children. Besides, parents can call their sons and daughters closely, for special name or code words make the strong parents-children relationship. Furthermore, when parents are free, use the time to do activities with children and accompany children to do children’s favorite things, such as playing basketball and computer games.

Chen (2007)⁶ mentioned that parents should cherish the time spent with children for parents-children relationship does play an important part in the process of children’s growing. Professor Li Cuen-fan in Chinese Culture University also proposed that parents should spend more time with children and pay attention to children’s behavior. Parents may read books, chat about everything and talk about domestic and international news with children, which can broaden children’s horizon. On the other hand, “teens still want and need parents to set limits and enforce order in their lives, even as parents grant them greater freedom and responsibility.”⁸

III. Conclusion

According to our research, though there are quite a few elements influencing the relationship between parents and children, they still get along with each other. Children are always apples in their parents’ mind. No matter what happens and no matter where they are, their parents are concerned about them all the time.

Parents are to children what harbors to ships. Whatever fault children do and however children treat parents. Even when children
have trouble doing something or feel depressed, parents put the fullest love on them and face the difficulties with them. Parents are truly the mental harbor to the children.

No other relationship is so close as parents-children relationship, which is the basis of all the other interpersonal relationship. Having a good parents-children relationship can help children generate a sense of safety and dare to trust others.

Adolescence need an increased independence allowed by parents and less supervision. How to strike a balance between controlling and letting go is a major issue needed to be learned by parents.

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V. The Questionnaire
Q1. Your parents’ attitude toward you is
□ Authoritative.
□ Democratic.

Q2. Do you live with your parents now?
□ Yes.
□ No, I live alone.
□ No, I live with my grandparents.
□ ______________________________

Q3. What activities do you usually do with your parents on holidays?
□ Going mountain climbing.
□ Going window shopping.
□ Watching shows.
□ Watching TV.
□ Visiting relatives.
□ ______________________________

Q4. Have you ever considered committing suicide?
□ Yes, because ______________________________
□ No.

Q5. Do you think your parents show respect for you when they make a decision?
□ Yes, always.
□ Yes, sometimes.
□ No.

Q6. Do you think your parents will always satisfy your need?
□ Yes.
□ No.

Q7. Do you think your parents have different attitude toward sons and daughters?
□ Yes.
□ No.

Q8. Would you make a rational communication with your parents?
□ Yes.
Q9. Do your parents ask you to come back home before an exact time?
☐ Yes, they ask me to come home before _______________________.
☐ No.

Q10. Do your parents limit the type of friends you make?
☐ Yes, always.
☐ Yes, sometimes.
☐ Never.
   If your answer is always or sometimes, then what types?

Q11. How is the atmosphere in your family?
☐ Good.
☐ OK.
☐ Bad.