

# *Family Communication Pattern Regarding The Implementation Of Sex Education For Early Adolescents*

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**Abstract** – This study aims to describe the communication pattern regarding sex education between parents and early adolescents. Sex education is one of the fields of study that can be applied as a way to shape the personality of adolescents. The reality shows that discussing topics of sexuality with children is considered taboo for some parents, thus creating such an obstacle for good communication pattern. This study is intended to determine the relationship between parental communication pattern in providing sex education and sex knowledge among early adolescents. The concepts applied here were Interpersonal Communication, Family Communication, Adolescent, and Sex Education. The researcher used a qualitative approach by referring to the phenomenological method. The results of the study obtained family communication pattern approaches based on informative and educative, persuasive, and instructive communication techniques.

**Keywords** – Family Communication Pattern, Sex Education, Early Adolescents.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings who need to communicate with other humans to express opinions, feelings, and desires so that others can understand them. Family is a social system that exists in society, where most people grow and learn (Asaari, Hanim, & Irawan, 2016). Communication in family interactions in terms of the interests of parents aims to provide information, advice, educate and please children. Usually, children communicate with parents to get advice, advice, input or to respond questions delivered by the parents (Nurwita, 2015).

The closeness between the child and parents is an absolute point for parents to be able to know the desires and feelings expression of child thoroughly in a communication process. Such closeness will make the child to be more valued and feel cared for so that the child will open up to advices delivered by their parents (Hidayat, 2012).

The role of parents is very important and considered as the most responsible thing in providing sex education to adolescents. However, in general parents feel reluctant to provide sex information to adolescents. This kind of reluctance can be understood since sex is still considered taboo, even though it is intended for providing sex education. Therefore, sex education should be delivered in an intimate, open and heart-to-heart atmosphere (Erni, 2013).

Parents have an obligation to educate and guide their children, as well as provide information, especially when children have grown up to be adolescents. Of course the treatment expected from parents is different considering that adolescence is a transitional period (Nambambi & Mufune, 2011). In terms of education, it leads to good qualities and behavior, as well as sex education related to adolescent developmental tasks, considering that adolescents have a very large curiosity about sex itself.

The significant increase in the number of adolescent problems such as pregnancy, rape, sexual harassment, sexually transmitted diseases and premarital sex problems among adolescents is mostly highlighted. One of the causes is regarding adolescent knowledge about sex and the further impacts (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018; Kustanty, 2019; Lumban Gaol & Stevanus, 2019). In fact, currently adolescents are very open to technology. They are faced with very much information, making it difficult to determine the proper education related to sex. They need to gain knowledge before they communicate more widely with friends, meet new people, find places to share, and join certain groups.

Parents as primary sex educators for children must develop good cooperation in achieving the goals of sex education. The role of parents in sex education (Lestari, 2015) include: (a) the role of cooperation between parents; (b) evaluators in sex education; (c) companion; (d) educators; and (e) monitors in sex education. Lestari Widayati (2015) adds that the division of tasks between parents as educators is important in sex education. The father is the representation of the male figure and the mother is the representation of the female figure. Through the division of tasks, children will know various aspects of sexuality and those aspects will develop during life. Developing a balanced and complete perception of sexuality will make children think positively about sexuality.

In an effort to avoid risky sexual behavior among adolescents, the role of parents in adolescent growth and development is very important. In addition, in responding to changes in this era, especially in this information age, parents must place themselves as friends for adolescents. For this reason, this study will explore how the communication pattern between parents and early adolescents can be well established and can solve problems through good and effective communication.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Interpersonal Communication**

De Vito (2008) in his book defines interpersonal communication as the process of sending and receiving messages between two or more people, both formally or informally. Interpersonal communication refers to interrelated feedback with the aim of helping someone to improve personal effectiveness and interpersonal effectiveness (Fauzi & Nugraha, 2020). Interpersonal communication requires actors to meet face-to-face between two or more people by bringing verbal and nonverbal messages, so that each can understand each other and interact effectively (DeVito, 2008).

Interpersonal communication is communication between two people face to face, which allows each participant to capture reactions directly, both verbal and non-verbal. In addition, the quality or intimacy of interpersonal communication is determined by each participant (Mulyana, 2014)

### **Family Communication**

The pattern of family communication is rooted in how the relationship between family members is created, which shows a number of processes such as family talks, family rituals, parental support for children, and also mutual understanding between family members. One can learn how to love, provide comfort, how to support, even facing disagreement through family relationships. Communication is needed by every family to negotiate goals, instill values, and maintain regulation and balance in the family (Pramono, 2020).

Good family communication between parents and children is reflected in the communication activities that are often carried out by both of them, the openness in interacting with each other, frequent discussions between parents and children about various things, mutual respect towards many opinions, and parents attitude to not trying to control and impose their will on children (Littlejohn & Foss, 2018: 284). Life in the family is formed through interactions developed between its members. Through communication, each member can know their roles, rules and expectations, how they form and manage relationships with one another, and how they interact with each other. Thus, family is also referred to as the first communication class (Eadie, 2009: 304).

### **Adolescent**

The word "adolescence" is the Latin word which means to grow or to grow maturity. Adolescents are those who are at an age range lasting approximately from 13 to 16 or 17 years, and the end of adolescence is between 17 to 18 years, which is stated as legally mature age (Jahja, 2011). People in the age range of adolescence are no longer included in the children group, but also cannot be fully accepted to be included in the adult group, so that adolescents are those included between children and adults (Mohammad Ali; Mohammad Asrori., 2010).

According to Syafrudin (2011), the change to adulthood reflects differences from one culture to another, but in general it can also be interpreted as the time when adolescents have a decision to be free from their parents. Adolescence is also a turbulent time filled with conflict and mood swings. Adolescents' thoughts, feelings, and actions fluctuate between pride and humility, good intentions and temptations, as well as happiness and sadness (Santrock, 2019).

### **Sex Education**

According to Safita (2013), sex education is knowledge about everything related to gender. This includes the growth of sex, how the sex functions as a means of reproduction, the development of the genitals in women and men, menstruation, wet dreams, and so on, to the emergence of lust due to changes in hormones, including later marriage problems, pregnancy and so on.

Sex education refers to the provision of information that aims to guide and nurture children since an early age, especially regarding relationships between the genders and sexual life in general so that they can do as they should, so that sex life may bring happiness and prosperity to mankind (Aziz, 2015).

Sex education is required to bridge between adolescents' curiosity about sex and various offers of vulgar information, by providing correct, honest, complete information about sexuality, which is adjusted to the maturity of their age (Putra, 2018). Ade Marta Putra (2018) also explains that sex education is important for adolescents so that they may get proper and accurate information about sexual and reproductive health issues. Sex education for adolescents aims to protect adolescents from various adverse consequences due to wrong sexual perceptions and behaviors.

### **III. STUDY METHODS**

The current study applied a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative descriptive study aims to describe various conditions, situations or various social reality phenomena that exist in the community as the study object and tries to raise such reality as a feature, character, model, sign, or description of a particular phenomenon (Bungin, 2007). This study used the phenomenological method. Phenomenology investigates experience and consciousness related to questions such as how the division between subject and object arises and how things in the world are classified (Littlejohn & Foss, 2018).

The subjects involved in this study consisted of 3 parents who had children aged 10-15 years and experience according to study topic, and parents with different levels of education and age of marriage.

### **IV. RESULTS**

#### **Family Communication Pattern Based on Informative and Educational Communication Techniques**

Based on informative and educative communication techniques, family communication pattern applied interpersonal communication. Parents as communicators consisted of father and mother. The message conveyed was different depending on the understanding of each individual. Mothers were considered to be more understood about the experience of early puberty for teenage girls because of the similarity of experiences as women. Meanwhile, fathers played more of a role in instilling morals in teenage boys by providing education about social norms, religion, and family values. However, the overall materials conveyed by the fathers and mother were similar. The difference was only regarding the depth of the message or information provided.

The medium of communication used was face-to-face. Communication was performed through personal communication and also small group discussion in the form of chats in the midst of family gatherings. The difference in the form depended on the intimacy of the message to be given. If adolescents felt embarrassed to discuss certain things at family gatherings, parents would choose personal communication. On the other hand, if the message to be delivered was not too personal, parents often used small groups communication, such as messages regarding social norms, religion, and family values.

Barriers that often appeared in this informative and educative communication pattern were in the form of physical barriers, namely the activities of adolescents which made them difficult to receive messages. Parents considered that the advices or information they delivered to children were not fully accepted by children because they are difficult to talk to. Another obstacle was the low level of parental education, which made them felt doubtful in providing an understanding of sex education since they themselves did not fully understand and were afraid to provide wrong information. Articulation problems also often arose because both parents and children had difficulty in expressing their feelings or thoughts to each other. Such condition tended to hinder the communication process. Another obstacle faced was regarding the characters of children or parents. There was a case of quiet

adolescent, so that his parents experienced obstacles in understanding the child's condition. The feedback obtained by the parents was minimal, even though the child's feedback is one of the considerations for processing messages and continuing the family's informative or educational communication pattern.

### **Family Communication Pattern Based on Persuasive Communication Technique**

Persuasive communication technique has distinctive characteristics and has a positive effect on the communicant because of its ability to change attitudes, opinions, and behavior of the communicant without coercion; the communicant will unconsciously follow the wishes of the communicator (Onong, 2017). Persuasive communication is done by persuading, seducing, convincing, inducing, providing lure, and so on so that awareness occurs from within the communicant without any coercion.

Based on persuasive communication technique, the pattern formed was interpersonal communication from mother to daughter. The message was in the form of an invitation to observe and understand the body condition of the daughters during puberty and to seek for the child's needs. The goal was that children did not feel ashamed or feel intimidated so that mothers played a more subtle role in conveying messages in the form of sex education regarding development of reproductive organs.

In persuasive communication technique, the media used by communicators was interpersonal communication with personal form of communication. Girls tended to feel confused and uncomfortable with their physical changes, so the mother subtly persuaded the child to understand her condition and physical development. Such communication was not performed in small group communication because it was worried to make teenage girls or boys feel embarrassed and uncomfortable, which in the end did not want to tell anything to the parents.

Barriers often found in persuasive communication pattern were the lack of parental understanding of sex education materials and also the child's character such as the quiet or harsh nature of the child which hampered the process of family communication.

### **Family Communication Pattern Based on Instructive Communication Technique**

Instructive or coercive communication technique aims to make people follow certain procedures and rules. In coercive communication, changes in the attitude and behavior of the communicant occur along with feelings of pressure and displeasure due to threats delivered by the communicator (Wiryanto, 2004).

In communication pattern based on instructive or coercive communication technique, the communicator referred to the father figure. In the family, the father is considered the leader of the family with the task of guiding family members so that the father figure is often imaged as a firm person. This technique was often used by parents who tended to be authoritarian. The verbal messages often conveyed were regarding social, religious, and family values and were applied especially to teenage girls since parents thought that teenage girls were more at risk from promiscuity.

Barriers found in family communication pattern based on this coercive communication technique were more of psychological barriers because the majority came from internal and psychological conditions of the communicators and communicants. Authoritarian parents tended to be closed-minded and did not allow their children to make arguments. Articulation problem was also found as a physiological type of obstacle during the communication process, and this obstacle was experienced by both parties.

### **Media and Forms of Communication**

In conveying the message, both father and mother chose to go through face-to-face interpersonal communication. Face-to-face communication is considered more effective because it involves more than one sense. Face-to-face communication will improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. The forms of communication that occurred in family communication pattern were personal and small group communication. In the form of personal communication, the communication pattern showed that the communicator, namely the father or mother, conveyed messages to the communicant namely the teenage boy or girl. The child then responded both verbally and nonverbally thereby creating interactive communication patterns.

The messages found in family communication pattern based on all communication techniques were related to the scope of sex education or adolescent reproductive health, namely the introduction of systems, processes, functions of reproductive organs, and reproductive rights; why adolescents need to mature the age of marriage and how to plan pregnancy so as to be in accordance with their wishes and their partners desires; HIV/AIDS and its adverse impact on reproductive health conditions; the dangers of drugs

and alcohol on reproductive health; the influence of social and media on sexual behavior; and development of communication skills, including strengthening self-confidence to be able to ward off negative things.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Certain pattern of family communication in providing sex education to teenage children indicated parents (father and mother) as communicators with the function of formulating and conveying messages to communicants, namely teenage boys and girls. The media used in delivering messages was interpersonal communication with the form of communication that tended to be personal since parents had to convey information carefully. The mother acted as the communicator for the teenage girl and the father acted as a communicator for the teenage boy. The form of small group communication was also often performed by parents, both father and mother, wherein most of the topics were about sex education in terms of religious, social, and family values.

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