UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR PSYCHO- EDUCATION AMONG PARENTS OF AT RISK ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Background: Our society is seeing an influx of disruptive behaviors amongst adolescents in the form of aggression, rebelliousness, resentment, social withdrawal, low self-esteem, anxiety andlow frustration tolerance, lack of self-confidence, poor social skills and poor academic performance. The emotional and behavioral problems often co-occur, in adolescents putting them at risk of inhibited psychological growth and a threat to society. Experimenting and risk-taking are part of adolescent life play a role in adolescent development. Parents can help adolescents by encouraging them to take the positive steps that strengthen them and lessen chances for negative behavior. Research has shown that effective parenting and adaptive family interactions can play a pivotal role in protecting adolescents from negative influences whereas inadequate parenting skills and maladaptive family interactions can contribute to the evolution of emotional and behavioral problems (Vuchinich, Bank and Patterson, 1992; Dishion, Nelson and Bullock, 2004).

Methods: The Parents need-assessment survey was conducted using key elements for the aforementioned programs to provide a structure for assessing and responding to the support and the needs of parents. The survey questionnaire consisted of 3 sections to assess a) demographic details b) Parent's knowledge and c) Parents training needs.

Results: The findings indicate that 89% parents agree that there is a need for such parenting workshops and 90% parents agreed

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that they would be interested in attending the psycho educational intervention. Majority of the parents reported that in the parents' psycho-education program they would like to include parenting skills, improve parent child relationship, understand and deal effectively with their adolescents and help them academically. 96% of the parents agreed that adolescences are a critical age than any other age group and 95% parents agreed that children are at risk during adolescence stage. Information was also collected from parents to find out what they see as needs for parenting education and support.

Conclusion: Consideration of at-risk adolescent issues will help to ensure that parents with different needs and capacities receive the most appropriate support.

Keywords: Need assessment, psycho education, parenting, at risk adolescents

Introduction

Parents have overwhelmingly reported that adolescents, specifically ages 14 to 18, is the most difficult stage of parenting (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Hoffman & Manis, 1978; Pasley & Gegas, 1984; Small & Eastman, 199, Steinberg, 1990). Parents of adolescents felt less adequate than when their children were younger (Steinberg, 1990) and more anxious about issues such as their children's growing independence and desire for more freedom than parents think appropriate (Small et al., 1988). The influence of negative peer pressure (Pasley & Gegas, 1984) and their children's involvement and deviant behaviours that might jeopardize their safety (Pasley & Gegas, 1984). Parents have reported heightened level of bickering and squabbling with adolescents compared with younger children (Steinberg, 1990). We are rarely trained in the most important task of our lives: raising our children. Licenses are not required (Carter 1996). Parents are a child's first teacher and parent–child interactions mould and integrate a child's emotional, social, cognitive and communicative development (Baird & Peterson 1997; Kelly & Barnard 1999; Mahoney, Boyce, Fewell, Spiker & Wheedon 1998; Dunst, Bruder, Trivette & Hamby 2001). It is not surprising, then, that most parents have concerns about their child's development and behaviour. Most mothers and fathers recognise the disparity between their parenting responsibilities and their parenting skills, and the majority embraces opportunities to learn how to raise their children well and promote optimal learning and development. Parents' skills and needs vary

widely. In preparing for parenting, most draw only on their own experiences as a child, which are a major influence on their own parenting style (Bowes 2000). Research confirms that 'what young children learn, how they react to the events and people around them, and what they expect from themselves and others, are deeply affected by their relationships with parents, the behaviour of parents, and the environment of the homes in which they live' (Shonkoff & Phillips 2000, p. 226). Furthermore, while all parents can learn new and effective strategies for supporting their child's development, not every parent is ready or willing to learn new strategies at a particular point in time. Parents must choose to participate (Kaiser & Hancock 2003). This study provides information on how to assess to the needs of parents by summarising the key elements of the survey. "Parent's psycho education intervention" will be designed for parents of at risk adolescents who require or request parenting support, especially where those parents are experiencing disadvantage.

Significance of the Study

We all remember what it's like to go through puberty and push further through adolescence. This is a time of intimate personal development and increasing independence. During the process of growth of a child to their adulthood, adolescents may make choices that could put their health and well-being at risk. The high-risk behaviors leading to these choices have the ability to shape adult behavior, and the consequences are costly to the society and the young people alike. Some of the most common adolescent high-risk behaviors include sexual activity, substance abuse, cigarette smoking, preventable injury and violence, including self-harm. The onset of multiple risk behaviours, such as smoking, anti-social behaviour, hazardous alcohol consumption and unprotected sexual intercourse, cluster in adolescence (DuRant, Smith., et al, 1999) and are associated with increased risk of poor educational attainment, future morbidity and premature mortality (Biglan, Brennan., et al, 2004). These behaviours go beyond pure 'risk-taking' behaviours and embrace behaviours which are ubiquitous in society, such as low levels of physical activity. These behaviours shape adult behaviour and the consequences are costly to society and young people. Further, people who engage in any risk behaviours are likely to engage in others (Shrier, Emans., et al, 1997). There may be shared biological and environmental factors which influence the development of these multiple behaviours, and so prevention and treatment interventions

may impact on more than one outcome (Burke, Milligan, Beilin., et al, 1997). Adolescents' risky behaviors are constantly evolving, often making it challenging to keep up with the pace. For this reason, a needs assessment survey is conducted to enable and determine whether the proposed 'parents psycho education intervention' course of action is entirely necessary in relation to the needs of the target group (parents). The results of the survey then will guide towards taking future action by first, focusing on the needs that the parents are looking for. Parent's psycho education intervention for the parents of at risk adolescents can only be successful if it is centered on their felt needs and concerns. The first and the foremost relevant step towards this was the recognition of the need to involve the parents in the identification of the risky behaviors in adolescence. Towards this we conducted the study and the agenda of the need assessment was to understand the perspectives of the parents regarding the challenges faced by them and to formulate an effective intervention accordingly to tackle it. The issues, needs and concerns of the adolescents as well as the skills and competencies that need to be integrated in the programme in order to enhance the parent child relationship and wellbeing of adolescents will be considered along with the logistics. Needs Assessments seek to gather accurate information that are representative of the parents' needs. Assessments are performed prior to taking action and are used to determine current situations as well as identify issues for action, establishing the essential foundation for vital planning. The process is an invaluable tool for involving the parents of the adolescents in solving problems and developing goals. A needs assessment can be an excellent way for the parents to become involved and contribute to the outcome.

Aim:

To assess the needs for parents to participate in "parent's psycho education intervention".

Objective:

1. To assess parents' understanding of adolescence.
2. To assess parents' understanding of risk during adolescence.
3. To assess the need for psycho-education among parents of adolescent children.
4. To assess the psycho-education training requirement for the parents of adolescent children.

Methodology

Participants: The participants of the present study consists of 100 parents of the adolescents of both genders within the age range of 14 to 16 years, studying in classes 8th, 9th and 10th standard of Pawar Public school in Pune. The sample of the study was collected through the method of purposive and convenience sampling.

Procedure: Participants were the parents of adolescents between the age ranges of 14 to 16 years. In order to obtain permission from the school a prior contact was made by taking appointment with the Principal of the school. Permission was granted by the school after discussing the nature of the study, the time required and assurance of complete confidentiality. Before actually conducting this study, a short pre-contact was made with the respective participants and the objective was explained to the participants. Then instructions were given to the participants for filling up of questionnaires. After completion of the questionnaires, scoring and tabulation of the data, it was subject to statistical analysis.

Tools: The Parents need assessment survey was conducted using key elements for the aforementioned programs to provide a structure for assessing and responding to the support needs of parents. This survey questionnaire consisted of 18 statements which are expressed in 3 dimensions to assess a) demographic details b) Parent's knowledge and c) Parents training needs.

Data Analysis: Data collected was analyzed using the SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics was used and reported in percentages, measures of central tendency (mean and median), as well as measures of central of dispersion (standard deviation and range).

Results

Table 1 : Assessment: parents' understanding of adolescence.
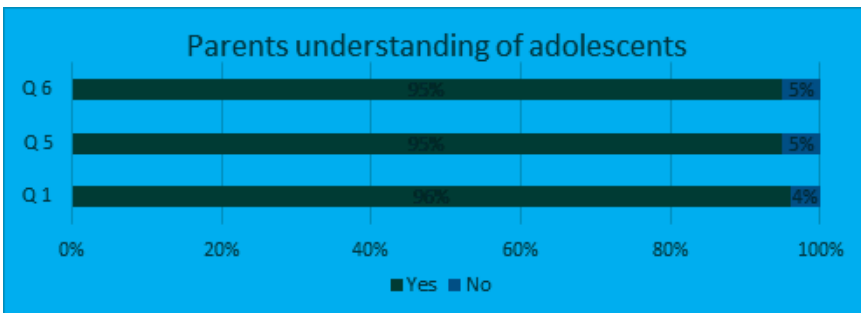
96% parents agree that adolescence is a critical age than other age groups whereas 4% of the parents did not agree. 95% parents agree that parent-child relationship is important during adolescence whereas 5% of the parents did not agree. 95% parents agree that parents can have any impact on an adolescent child whereas 5% of the parents did not agree.

Parents answered open-ended questions about the various challenges a parent of adolescent children can experience. A detailed analysis revealed that parents identified 8 distinct challenges any parent can experience. The three most frequently answered challenges they faced were   1) Behavioural issues, 2) Skill Sets and 3) Addiction – Social media, phone, and substances.

Table 2: Assessment: parents' understanding of risk during adolescence

Rank	Topic	Total Frequency
1	Behavioural issues	47
2	Skill Set	27
3	Addiction – Social media, phone, substance	23
4	Emotional issues	20
5	Academic issues	15
6	Mental health concern	11
7	Parent child relationship	9
8	Peer pressure	4

96% parents agree that children get at risk during adolescence stage whereas 4% of the parents did not agree. 95% parents agree that they find it difficult to handle their adolescent child whereas 5% of the parents did not agree. The parents answered open-ended questions about the various challenges which an adolescent can face. A detailed analysis revealed that parents identified 11 distinct challenges which an adolescent can face. The three most frequently mentioned challenges were 1) Peer pressure, 2) Behavioural issues, etc. and 3) Lack of Skills Set.

Table 3: Assessment: the need for psycho-education among parents
of adolescent children

Rank	Topic	Total Frequency
1	Peer pressure	32
2	Behavioural issues	27
3	Lack of Skills Set	22
4	Addiction – Social media, phone, substance	20
5	Academic issues	19
6	Mental health concern	18
7	Puberty, hormonal and physical changes	11
8	Social pressure	10
9	Emotional challenges	7
10	Parent child communication/relationship	5
11	Identity crisis	4

88% parents agree that parents of adolescents require help to deal with the challenges whereas 12% of the parents did not agree. 90% parents agree that they would you be interested in attending sessions on psycho education program for parents to deal effectively with the adolescent's challenging/risky behavior whereas 10% of the parents did not agree. 82% parents agree that they need to enhance their parenting skills whereas 18% of the parents did not agree. 89% parents agree that they need to enhance their parenting skills whereas 11% of the parents did not agree. The parents answered open-ended questions about the topics they would like to be included in the parent's psycho-education programs. A detailed analysis revealed that parents expressed six topics they would like to be included in the parent's psycho-education programs. The three most frequently mentioned challenges were 1) Skills Set, 2) Dealing with Behavioural and emotional issues, and 3) Improving Study Skills

Table 4: Assessment: the psycho-education training requirement
for the parents of adolescent children

Rank	Topic	Total Frequency
1	Skills Set	40
2	Dealing with Behavioural and emotional issues	32
3	Improving Study Skills	21
4	Enhancing Parenting Skill	20
5	Understanding Adolescence	15
6	Improving Parent child communication/relationship	14

86% parents agree to invest 2 hours per session whereas 14% agrees to invest 3 hours per session. 21% parents are comfortable on weekdays whereas 79% parents are comfortable on weekends. 95% parents agree to attend 10 sessions whereas 5% parents agree to attend 12 sessions. 86% parents are comfortable to come for weekly sessions whereas 14% parents are not comfortable to come for weekly sessions. 62% parents prefer to attend the meetings in the morning for the parent education programs at the school, 15% prefers in the afternoon and 23% prefer in the evening. 4% parents would prefer the sessions to be conducted as a lecture method, 24% prefers the activity based and 72% prefer both.

Discussion

A parent survey was conducted to assess the needs of parents to participate in "parent's psycho education intervention". Parents come to parent support services with varying needs. Some of these parents may not really understand what their needs are; they just know they have a problem. Some parents will be seeking a solution to a specific problem, while others will be looking for broader strategies and understanding to help them in their role as a parent and to foster a positive relationship with their child. In talking with the parent, it is important to ascertain whether the parent's needs are straightforward; do they want concrete information and strategies on dealing with specific behaviours or problems (such as establishing and keeping a nightly routine for their child)? or do they need help with a more complicated task (such as understanding and managing their child's emotions and behaviour)?

Parents' understanding of adolescence

It is believed that lack of knowledge about a typical development area in a child could lead to unrealistic expectations – expecting too much or too little – which, in turn, could lead to child abuse and neglect. In addition, parents can facilitate children's healthy development by understanding developmental milestones. It is recommended that parents understand their children's development, needs and uniqueness. It is also important that parents accept that each child is different, know developmentally appropriate behaviors of their child (age appropriate) and try to meet children's basic needs (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and creative). The result states that 96% parents agree that adolescence is a critical age

than other age groups whereas 4% of the parents did not agree. 95% parents agree that parent- child relationship is important during adolescence and thatparents can have any impact on an adolescent whereas 5% of the parents did not agree. Parents answered an open-ended question about the various challenges parents of adolescent children can experience. A detailed analysis revealed that parents identified 8 distinct challenges that any parent of adolescent children can experience. The three most frequently answered challenges they faced were 1) Behavioural issues, 2) Skill Sets and 3) Addiction – Social media, phone, and substance. What parents know about children's development is positively related to their skills in designing a supportive learning environment and to their ability to interact in ways that stimulate development. Providing parents with information about child development is a highly cost-effective human service that enhances the knowledge base of parents and others in the parent's personal and social network that also interacts with the child (Stevens, 1984; Schmitt, 1987).

Parents understanding of risk during adolescence

Many parents have concerns about parenting. Some might need parenting information to deal with specific issues like aggression, mood swing and others might want to learn how to interact with their child. Parents do not always realize that they do not have information that they need. For example, a parent lacking knowledge about typical development may become stressed when their adolescent child starts answering back at them. Parenting is not only about responding to the child's problematic behaviors, but supporting the child's positive development, behavior and outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to review the adolescents' development literature to identify critical areas. According to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (USDHHS, 2010), parenting education is a core prevention service. In particular, parenting education classes can help parents acquire and internalize parenting and problem-solving skills necessary to build a healthy family and further prevent child abuse and neglect. It is important that parents know how to use their power effectively, set reasonable limits to protect their children, give freedom at the same time and help children to learn responsibility. It is suggested that parents encourage and support their children, build a positive relationship (attachment), show love and respond promptly to their children. 96% parents agree that children get at risk during adolescence stage whereas 4% of the parents did

not agree. 95% parents agree that they find it difficult to handle their adolescent child whereas 5% of the parents did not agree. The parents answered this open-ended question about the various challenges which an adolescent can face. A detailed analysis revealed that parents identified eleven distinct challenges which an adolescent can face. The three most frequently mentioned challenges were 1) Peer pressure, 2) Behavioural issues, etc.) and 3) Lack of Skills Set. Parents' knowledge of difficult developmental phases can help them provide for their children's needs while preventing risky behaviours in their child. Parents who understand their children are likely to create an environment that challenges them, one that is neither boring because it expects too little nor distressing because it expects too much (Hunt and Paraskevopouls, 1980).

Need for psycho-education among parents of adolescent children

Every parent-child relationship is different and very personal as it is based on the interaction between two individuals, and each of whose personality is unique. Some children are easy to deal with while some are difficult. The easy dealing child can be disciplined well and hardly trouble their parents in any way. But some are born with a different temperament who cannot be disciplined with severe scolding, or punishing. So children should be understood based on their nature, their inherent personality and nurture their upbringing pattern. Problems in upbringing arise as the child does not have a role model or the parents are not around most of the time and therefore the rules laid down are inconsistent. So parenting is not an instinctual knowledge. It is a science and an art that needs to be learnt. Problems in parenting arise due to lack of skills. These skills can be learnt through undergoing proper training. Parents can be trained in parenting that affirms the dignity and humanity of both parents and children. 88% parents agree that parents of adolescents require help to deal with the challenges whereas 12% of the parents did not agree. 90% parents agree that they would be interested in attending sessions on psycho education program to deal effectively with the adolescent's challenging/risky behavior whereas 10% of the parents did not agree. 82% parents agree that they need to enhance their parenting skills whereas 18% of the parents did not agree. 89% parents agree that they need to enhance their parenting skills whereas 11% of the parents did not agree. In addition, the parents were also asked about the topics they would like to be included in

the parent's psycho-education programs (open-ended question). A detailed analysis revealed that parents expressed six topics they would like to be included in the parent's psycho-education programs. The three most frequently mentioned challenges were 1) Skills Set, 2) Dealing with Behavioural and emotional issues, and 3) Improving Study Skills. The use of psycho-education in parenting programs is useful due to the educational benefits it presents to the parents for utilizing positive reinforcements rather than negative reinforcements (Nicholson, Anderson, Fox & Brenner, 2002). Psycho-education also educates parents on the developmental stages so they can have appropriate expectations from their children.

Psycho-education training requirement for the parents of adolescent children

Understanding of parents' information needs should also be considered (Hughes & Durio, 1983). Harman & Brim (1980) caution that educators must find ways of assessing the actual desired information of the parents rather than imposing their own preconceived perception of what the parents need. Readiness or immediate need for information may also influence what the parent will learn from any source. When planning parenting education workshops, it is important to know parents' preferences of workshop formats. 86% parents agree to invest 2 hours per session whereas 14% agrees to invest 3 hours per session. The largest percent of parents i.e. 79% preferred weekends and only 21% percent of parents preferred to attend parenting education intervention during weekdays. 95% parents agree to attend 10 sessions whereas 5% parents agree to attend 12 sessions. 86% parents are comfortable to come for weekly session whereas 14% parents are not comfortable to come for weekly session. 62% parents prefer to attend the meetings in the morning for the parent education programs at the school, 15% prefers in the afternoon and 23% prefer in the evening. Parents also indicated how they would prefer to get information. As can be seen in table 4, the largest percentage wanted to get information through both the methods, while lecture method was the least popular delivery method. 4% parents would prefer the sessions to be conducted as a lecture method, 24% prefers the activity based and 72% prefer both.

Conclusion

It's important for parents to know the risky behavior that the adolescents are engaging in their adolescent period which could

lead to negative consequences. Engaging and retaining participants are crucial to achieving adequate implementation of parenting interventions. The need assessment helped in identifying the needs of the parents that they would wish to address during the intervention. Parenting support can enhance the development of healthy, positive parent–child interactions and this may be especially beneficial when parents are facing challenges that may compromise their parenting capacity. However, unless a program meets a parent's needs and is appropriate to their circumstances, the potential benefits of a parenting program could be lost. Key elements of the need assessment survey has provided an insight into the critical factors that need to be considered in order for the researcher to assess and respond to the parents psycho education intervention of at risk adolescence. When carefully examined, the key components of the need assessment survey can serve as guidelines for the creation, implementation and evaluation of quality parent psycho education intervention. Programs adhering to the best practices in parent education intervention will carefully consider both program and participant needs. By following these best practices in parent education programs, practitioners can increase their chances of delivering programs that will strengthen parenting and enhance the well- being of children.

Limitations

There are two main limitations on the study's findings.
- The survey responses were self-reported by the respondents. Although there is research to support the validity of self-reported responses, this opens the possibility that respondents could over- or underestimate their need for parenting sessions. However, it would have been too time consuming to conduct independent interviews.
- Every effort was made to insure confidentiality in the surveys, but there is the possibility that participants responded in consideration of social desirability to show interest in the intervention. This may have inflated the need for psycho education intervention results.

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