

A Report of the symposium on ‘Nurturing Healthy Adolescent development through parental involvement.’

Adolescent development is critical for a thriving society. The transitional life-phase of adolescence is a critical period influencing physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional growth. Parents play a crucial role in shaping this journey. This symposium, organized by KKCE, focuses on enhancing positive parenting practices for adolescent children in India. Parents serve as essential guides, providing emotional support, fostering decision-making skills, and contributing to responsible behaviour.

Objectives of the Symposium

The online symposium aims to bring together researchers, practitioners, and experts and student teachers to share insights, discuss challenges, and explore innovative methods for empowering both adolescents and parents.

It is to encourage practitioners and researchers to come together on a platform to share, learn and discuss ways to contribute effectively to adolescent future and positively impact society.

Date & Venue

14th December, 2023 at Smt Kapila Khandvala college of Education, Juhu road, Santacruz west, Mumbai.

Organizers

Sadhana Education Society’s Smt Kapila Khandvala college of Education in collaboration with UNICEF.

Target audience:

Practitioners (Principals, teachers, teacher educators, student teachers)
Policy makers, Parents concerned with healthy adolescent development

Organizing team:

Dr. Jayashree Inbaraj (Principal)
Dr. Vidya Naik (convener)
Dr. Sheetal Zalte (coordinator)
Dr Nilesh Chatterjee (Moderator)

Theme and Topics

Theme: Adolescent development and Parent Involvement

Topics:

Overview- Adolescent development & Role of Parents –Global problems – local solutions

Brain and behaviour - Dr. Deepti Gada

Research on Parenting & Adolescents - Dr. Nair M K C ,Dr. Raju M V R ,Dr. Mrinmoyi Kulkarni ,Dr. Nudrat Jahan

Practitioners Panel on Implementation of parenting programs: Ms. Sheela Mallaya, Ms. Seema Shaikh, Mrs. Prassana Mohandas, Mr. Sunil Satpute.

Concluding session- Dr Vidya Naik

Introductory session:

The Symposium began with Dr Jayashree Inbaraj, Principal of Smt Kapila Khandvala College of Education, Mumbai welcome the participants to the symposium. She gave a brief background to the project on Parenting of adolescents in partnership with UNICEF for the year 2022-23. She expressed gratitude to Mr Sanjay Singh, UNICEF and Dr Nilesh Chatterjee the principal investigator for providing exemplary leadership in research to conduct an in-depth mixed method study. The symposium she said is an opportunity to share some of the critical findings with researchers, practitioners and pre-service teachers from different colleges in Mumbai and Jammu and also hear other experts on the same subject. She said it is noteworthy that several institutions have registered for the symposium. The symposium has representation from researchers, principals, teachers, teacher educators, and student teachers. She said such high numbers of attendance is a positive indicator of interest in this area of work.

Dr Chatterjee in his role as moderator set the tone for the symposium. He outlined the flow of the program and his role to connect the learnings from the different presentations in the symposium. He shared the two competitions that would be attached to this symposium for the pre-service teachers who will embark on their journey soon to become full-fledged teachers in different schools. One competition was immediate within the symposium and the other within ten days. He laid out the details of the competition before the proceedings of the symposium could begin.

Competition 1

Student teachers participating from different teacher education colleges should pose questions on the chat in relation to the topic and the questions will be picked for asking the researchers and practitioners presenting. The student teachers may ask as many questions however they have to ensure they are relevant questions. The college that asks the highest number of questions will get a cash prize of Rs. 2000 and that will go to the principal who can decide to give it to the student who carries out a relevant action research in the area of parenting of adolescents. The prize will be declared immediately.

Competition 2

The second competition announced was for student teachers participating in the symposium to encourage future teachers to actively participate, gain insights, and contribute innovative ideas. The topic for the competition stated was *"How can we as teachers ensure greater involvement and engagement of parents in the education and healthy growth and development of their adolescent children?"* The competition was open to individuals or teams. The task was to Identify the barriers to parental involvement, then select what the individual or team thinks is an important barrier, try and explain the reasons or factors causing the barrier or barriers, propose an idea/concept to address the barrier(s), and finally create a brief, workable action

plan for households, schools or communities (max 1500 words). The submission deadline was within a week after the symposium date (December 20). He said the best entries would be uploaded on KKCE website. And a cash prize of Rs 5000/- was announced for the best idea. Acknowledgement letter for all participants would be given.

Session I – Adolescent development & Role of Parents –Global problems – local solutions.

The first session's speaker, Mr. Sanjay Singh from UNICEF gave an overview of Adolescent development issues and tracked the development of adolescent parenting from a global to a local context. Supporting his talk with interesting exemplars and data, Mr Singh covered a wide range of important topics in his speech, stressing the role that parenting plays in adolescent growth and the creation of future individuals who are capable and self-reliant. He said the best course of action is to use evidence-based solutions to connect with the absentee father and less autonomous mother with reference to parenting. With interesting frameworks such as socio –ecological framework, nurturing care framework and the Belsky framework he clearly demonstrated the importance of parenting as an SDG accelerator. He stressed on the importance of “survive to thrive agenda” for the adolescents’ in the country as a demographic population. The four areas of intervention that the talk highlighted was father involvement, empowering mothers to be more effective decision maker with greater autonomy, building social skills among adolescent and capacity enhancement for frontline workers. He also spoke of digital barriers in parenting which the current study also flags of. He appreciated the research work carried out by Smt Kapila Khandvala college of Education in partnership with UNICEF under the leadership of Dr Nilesh Chatterjee and said such research and interventions need to be replicated in several places in the country to bring about a positive change in the well-being of the adolescent population in India.

Session II - Brain and Behaviour

The session on Brain and behaviour by Dr Dipti Gada a psychiatrist by practice very skilfully described as well as explained the adolescent’s nature and characteristics and how the brain and biology plays a very important role in shaping their behaviour during this phase. The brain plays a significant role and she says most parents and sometimes even teachers may not be aware of this. The part of the brain that carries out executive functions that require weighing long term consequences is the last to develop in the journey from childhood to adulthood. So a teenager is not able to many times take correct decisions and gives in to temptations. The stress and high emotions at this stage make them rebellious and difficult to understand. So hormonal pressures, parental pressures, peer pressure leads to confusion, anxiety and low self-esteem. Identity crisis is another major problem the adolescent faces as they move from being an adolescent to an adult. Dr Gada listed depression, addiction and suicide as major issues and supported her talk with data. She also shared some interesting anecdotes to clarify some of the issues.

III Session – Research on Parenting of Adolescents

The third session was *Research on Parenting and Adolescents*. This session had several accomplished researchers pan India share their research findings and insights in the given area of reference.

Dr. Mrinmoyi Kulkarni, a social Psychologist IIT, Mumbai had conducted a qualitative study on children ranging from 10-18 years and their mothers from lower,- middle, and upper SES in Mumbai. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants. Dr Kulkarni spoke of self-regulation as a significant factor affecting the development of adolescents. She said self-regulation in her study had life altering consequences. Self-regulation was significantly related to academic performance of 9th graders and well-being of both 9th and 11th graders.

Dr. Nudrat Jahan, faculty from Department of Psychology, SOHS, K R Mangalam University, Gurugram spoke of the 5C model for Positive youth development (PYD) by Richard learner. The research findings indicate the 5 C model for PYD has positive outcomes and fosters enhanced positive relationships, creates opportunities and provides support for learning. she said this could be an useful model for interventions with parenting.

Dr MVM Raju Director, Psychology and Para Psychology dept , Andhra University spoke of parenting as a complex endeavour that operates both individually and collaboratively in shaping the adolescent. Parents' play a crucial role in making in making emotional connect through their communication. He spoke of certain parental styles that have positive correlation with negative tendencies. For instance permissive and uninvolved parenting, are linked to adverse outcomes, including negative suicidal ideation. He shared data on suicides among adolescents in India and reiterated the need for mental health interventions for this age group.

Ms. Anshu Francis a nursing professional from the Nursing council of New Zealand shared her study to assess the relationship between psychological well- being and perceived parenting style among selected high school students of Udupi district. The study she said was conducted to assess the parenting styles and psychological needs influences on adolescent life goals and aspirations. The results suggested that authoritative and authoritarian parenting style was effective in the adoption of life goals and psychological well-being of adolescents. Authoritative and authoritarian parenting style helped the overall well-being of the adolescent and corroborates with other studies abroad of a similar nature. Overall the researches emphasised the importance of adolescent care and development and parenting as the key factor for adolescent wellbeing.

Mr Ravi Mishra, faculty KKCE and Dr Chatterjee jointly presented a quantitative study on *Indian Parents beliefs about Adolescents: Comparison by Parents gender, age of eldest child and urban/Rural residence*. The presentation covered the background of the study: A cross sectional study that involved 1844 parent respondents across 5 different geographical locations in India. Major findings of the quantitative study indicated the following: The study's findings show no significant difference in parental beliefs by parent's gender, age of parent, mother's education level and gender of child. Notable variation in parental beliefs is observed when data is compared across the geographies. This is an interesting finding for those working with parents and parenting of adolescents. The implications of the study suggest parents today are in a transition phase as some new beliefs are coming in and some old ideas are being discarded and this is making them feel a bit out of control and therefore study recommends finding ways to help parents balance their ideas and notions of obedience with bringing in the new ideas of being an adolescent today. It also suggests exploring ways to help parents understand new forms of discipline that take them from their zone of comfort, without causing too much discomfort and negative reactions, to a new way of parenting for the new technological & information age.

Session IV - Practitioners Panel on Implementation of parenting programs

Post lunch was devoted to understanding practitioners view on implementing parenting programs. Interesting sharing by principals and NGO workers highlighting their real life experiences and insights in involving parents while implementing programs in their institutions. Their shared varied experiences had important learnings for all.

Ms Seema Shaikh, Principal and Director of Pradnya Bodhini High school, Goregoan, Mumbai shared that at her school parents are interested and concerned about the wellbeing of the adolescents in the school. In fact she has seen adolescents thrive when parents are involved in the activities of their teens. However, reaching out to parents whose children need attention sometimes is challenging. She said her school has a very good rapport in general but when the target parents are poor and depend on daily wages they can't afford to lose their salary to attend meetings. She cautioned though that parents focus too much on marks and behavioural change is never discussed and often they do not see the value of collaboration between parents and the school due to their difficult conditions. They say we have their children to schools to be in your care. Teachers too need to understand the stage of development and reduce their complaints about adolescents.

Mrs Prasanna Mohandas, Principal of Purushottam high school, Bandra E , Mumbai spoke of the challenges of dealing with parents. She said Post Covid parents had issues with fees which the school helped to resolve to some extent. Tailoring classes for some mothers were organized as proactive actions. But on the whole parents refuse to come to schools to discuss issues due to to her engagements and timings of work etc. they lack information and remain passive and non-responsive to schools efforts. Sometimes parents are in denial and refuse to accept that their ward has issues of substance abuse or bad behaviour.

Ms. Shradda Mehta, Principal of Mother Teresa high school, Kandivili, Mumbai spoke of the challenges in engaging children on puberty development, sex and sexual orientation subjects which is very much needed. She spoke of conflicting value systems between parents and the adolescent which is problematic. She said parents have no quality time to spare for their children especially for children from poor Socio-economic status. She said there are enough instances in the school to know that parents have low understanding of the adolescent phase and the implications of biological changes and the low awareness leads to several complications. She said her school is not fully equipped to intervene and does not have resources due to costs and other academic demands. She expressed her desire to do more and said schools need to intervene as it impacts future lives of adolescents.

Al Nasir Zacharia, the principal of Awami Junior college , Bandra , Mumbai spoke of three main challenges: lack of value for education among parents, gender stereotyping which led to girls being married off and so they leave the school system mid-way. He also said that most of his students come from minority groups with low SES and hence their living conditions are poor with lack of space and no comfort to study. The solutions they applied in their schools were strengthening the PTA, having SMC meetings with clear agenda and implementation of plans, providing extended library hours for the adolescent girls and boys to study.

Mr Sunil Satpute from Baljeevan trust, Vakola, Mumbai shared his experiences with adolescent group and their parents. He spoke generally of students of adolescent age having aggression issue. He said many at his centre have the tendency to get into substance abuse. In his opinion the communication gap among the parents and the teenagers is one crucial cause for

adolescents rebelling. Secondly, parents come for meetings but are more interested in talking about themselves and their problems, their relationships with the husband or neighbourhood. He said they often call parents to just stress the need for their presence while the child is studying. Just sitting beside them is very essential he said. He spoke of the challenge of harsh and abusive language that parents use coming from poor backgrounds and finding it hard to make ends meet.

Ms. Sheela Mallaya, Principal of Children's Academy, Kandivili, Mumbai presented the programmes they do for adolescent well-being. Some of the concern areas listed for adolescents were addiction to media and internet, social media, self-image, body image, parental separation, psychosomatic problems etc. currently defiance in teenagers is something starkly visible and teachers are unable to handle this kind of reaction. She said the school being progressive have a holistic program for students such as life skills, group counselling, anti-bullying week, time management, art, behavioural therapy, Non-violent communication, digital detox and remedial for under achieving students. They have expanded a team of counsellors and call it the CARE DEPT. teacher training for counselling has become an important part of the teacher competencies. The number of adolescents who need attention are increasing and it is not possible for the counsellor to handle all cases. So teachers are playing the counsellors role too. They have embedded life skills into the curriculum for a holistic integration. She said parent involvement though is not easy. She shared data to show that parents do come for a common meeting where academics will be discussed but specific workshops to upgrade parent skills are not attended well enough. They use now programs that speak the language of the teenager like podcasts, dialogue with the teacher and flash walks for well-being themes.

In the debrief post presentations, Dr Chatterjee made some notable observations. He said in today's times it is critical to prepare adolescents to become Lifelong learners as they have to be ready for self-learning on several fronts, personal, financial, work life etc. He said they are not only competing with peers but AI too which is going to be very challenging. Dr Chatterjee added that presently and in future teacher training for multi-skills will be essential and teachers will have to serve as role models who can understand different causes that trouble young students, handle them with respect and care and learn how to provide appropriate interventions. He appreciated the principals for sharing their struggles and some success stories in dealing with adolescent well-being and reaching out to parents.

Dr Naik, the convener concluded the session with some significant observations. She spoke of the need for family and school to collaborate. She said school is a trusted agency and hence the responsibility of our young students should be shouldered by school. They have to train teachers in Psychology of the child, understand the power of the hidden curriculum. The challenges are plenty as several factors such as SES, Education levels, nuclear family structure, and lack of awareness plays a role. She said stakeholders such as family, school, student, NGO's have to work together to bring a change in the area of adolescent well-being.

Dr Sheetal Zalte, KKCE proposed the vote of thanks. She thanked the organizing team, the convener Dr Naik, the presenters and the participants. She congratulated the college student teachers for asking several relevant questions which were selected and posed by Dr Chatterjee to the resource people in today's symposium. She expressed gratitude to the heads of the teacher education colleges for deputing their teachers and students to participate in the symposium.