

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEX TO MEASURE QUALITY FAMILY COMMUNICATION: STRATEGY TO OVERCOME DELINQUENCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MEDAN, NORTH SUMATRA-INDONESIA

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## Abstract

Communication is an important element in relationship among families. Communication is seen by scholars as an essential factor in interpersonal relationship between family members and it is an important key in understanding the relationship that exist in a family. This study intends to understand family communication strategy to overcome youth delinquency.

The specific objective of this study is to understand quality communication factors in a family, to understand quality communication being practiced in problematic and non-problematic adolescent and to understand other factors that contribute towards quality communication among family members. Six respondents comprising of academicians, motivation expert and religious expert were interviewed regarding family communication to overcome youth delinquency.

The themes identified based on the 1st objective were openness, transparency, mutual respect, authentic information, using appropriate language, space for counter response, using appropriate body language, two way communication, exists personal touch between adolescents and parents, no evil prejudice, exists humorous elements during conversation and based on Al-Quran and Hadis. To answer the 2nd objective, the identified themes were each family must carry out get-together activities such as recreation, having their meals, praying, watching television and others, to discuss, communicate using third party if there is a problem, to give opportunities to voice out feelings, praying together, using ICT to interact when separated by distance and to enquire about the development of their adolescents in and outside school. The themes that were identified in the 3rd objective were other factors that contribute toward quality communication among family and they are economy, parents level of education, home that is spacious and comfortable, neighborhood, harmonious family, number of children, parental knowledge, good friends, positive thinking, firm parents, the existence of media technology at home, multi knowledge of parents and the existence of other people at home.

The conclusion gained is that today there exist different strategies to manage a family to understand quality communication to overcome youth delinquency. This study can be used as a guide to enhance knowledge and to further understand different types of quality communication in a family.

**Keywords:** Family, Communication, Quality, Adolescent, Delinquency

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic thing that exists in our daily life. It is an interaction process between individuals to form a relationship between them (Beebe, Beebe & Redmond, 2007). According to Pearson and Nelson (2000), communication is a process to understand and share meaning between communicators. In other words, communication is a process to exchange ideas and feelings. The harmony in a relationship (communication) will be achieved when both parties have mutual understanding and respect for one another. Communication can be in both written (verbal) and action (nonverbal) form.

Many previous studies have identified that the communication between adolescents and parents as one of the important factors that would prevent adolescents from getting involved in bad social activities. Communication that is open and transparent whereby adolescents are able to share problems with their

parents and can provide ideas and views will be able to build their character and indirectly will enable them to possess positive thinking and not easily influenced by outsiders to do negative things.

The period of adolescent that need to be undergone by adolescent is acknowledged by psychologists as a period known as “storm and stress” because they experience physical and mental (emotional) changes due to the biological changes that occur naturally to every individuals that shift from the children’s period to adolescents period (Kaplan, 2004; Rathus, 2006). The adjustments that need to be done by adolescents will make some of them to feel stressful and confuse till some of them might rebel and get involved in various horrendous activities.

Hartos and Power (2000) stress that the communication between adolescent and parents has a positive behavior among adolescents such as academic excellence and also negative behavior among adolescents such as drug and alcohol addiction and also other wrong doings . Clark and Shields (1997) also quoted Hirschi’s study whereby it was identified that an increase in intimacy communication between children and parents will be able to reduce wrong doings among children. Barberet (2004) identified that a close relationship between parents and children can be an obstacle towards wrong doings among adolescents. Similarly a study carried out by Klein et al. (1997) found out that communication between a mother and child is an important variable that has a relationship with an increase or decrease in wrong doings among children.

### **1.1. Family Communication**

In family, good communication served to bound family into one solid institution since all problems could be tackled when both parties have the opportunities to express their feeling and in the same time could understand and overcome the problems that they faced. According to Lubis (2011), communication in family is a two way communication (giving and taking) verbally or non-verbal. Non-verbal communication includes movements, facial gestures, eye contacts and eye movement. A functional family will accept and try to comprehend the message delivered whether vague or clear between others. Meanwhile, a dysfunctional family rarely accepts the message properly; in fact the message is being ignored.

Fauziah Hanim (2005) stated verbal communication between parent and children’s that happens every day encompass sharing of feelings, questionings, answering, discussing on ideas, quarrel, negotiating and others. Those activities is a socialization process whereby those young ones learn to identify values, attitudes and many other behaviors.

According to Paschall, M.J. et.al (2003) the best way to communicate in family is to arouse the feeling of sharing and listening. Message delivered must be clear and appropriate. If there is a difference in opinion, family will accept agreement to discuss. A healthy family looks onto problems in a positive ways, which is focusing on how to solve the problem not whose fault is it.

### **1.2. Adolescent**

Adolescent defines from a Latin word ‘adolescere’ which refer to a period when psychological and physical growth in oneself and the time whenever they reach the stage of puberty until they become matured people (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). Meanwhile, according to Alias, M. et.al (2013), adolescent can be defined as grow and develop towards maturity and sane. Psychologist claims that youth stages as circumstances where it is kind of transformation from young human beings to a fully grown person.

However, Zurawan, A. (2004) have different idea upon its meaning. According to Zurawan, adolescent is a timeline when physical and social happen to shift with the great impacts. This has shown that the body changing occurred simultaneously with the changes in their friendship exposure and heterogeneous rather than before. Meaning in their earlier ages, their relationship had limitation for instance within solely. The fellow friends and neighborhood. However, it may change when they reach their adulthood stages. They are becoming more adventurous as they started to mingle around with more colleagues which come from various schools villages and other residential.

### **1.3. Social Control Theory and Parent and Child Attachment**

Social Control Theory introduced by Hirschi (1969; in Kim, 2003) explain how socialization process that happen in children could prevent them from involved with misconduct. According to Kim (2003), society’ values and norms could indirectly be inculcated through socialization process that occurs between children with institution such as family, peers, schools and society. Social control exists through attachment or relations between individual with parent, school, social institution and so on.

Hirschi (1969; in Kim, 2003) has categorized social connection into four elements; attachment, involvement, commitment and belief. For attachment element, the relationship that exist with others in the society (such as parent, school) will hinder them from involve in misconduct in order to maintain the relationship. Meanwhile for involvement element, individual that spend most of the time with conventional activities such as homework or spending time with family will not have the time and opportunities to involve in unhealthy issues. For someone who has the commitment element, they will never sacrifice their hopes by doing things that opposite of the norms. Hircshi later stressed out that people who believe and adhere to the norms and values will not easily be influence with unbeneficial matters.

Many scholars agree that attachment factor between parent and children's is the more consistent predictor towards youth misconduct (Carswell, 2005 and Kim, 2003). Parent and children attachment is define as the level of relation intimacy, respects and loving between parent and children (Carswell, 2005).

## 2. OBJECTIVE

This study aims to build an index that would measure quality family communication as a strategy to overcome problems related to youth delinquency. The main objective of this study is to understand quality communication characteristics in families, to understand quality communication practices among problematic and non-problematic families and to understand factors that contribute toward quality communication practices in families.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The criteria for the selection of sample are based on established spokesman inclined to the field of family communication. This qualitative observation study used purposive sampling. The selection of cases for this study is based on the following criteria:

- The subjects are experts in the field of family communication and able to speak in that particular
- The subjects are divided into 3 expertise's, they are, expert in the field of motivation, academic and religion in the perspective of Islam.

Six (6) respondents were interviewed based on guideline on open and non-structured questions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. The questions discussed were based on the objectives of the study. The data obtained from the interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions were examined according to themes based on context, input, process and product. After that, these themes were coded according to specific categories. The categories were later presented to other researchers to establish authenticity.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that six (6) respondents have interviewed were lecturers and motivation experts. The respondents were divided based on background of expert on religion, motivation and academician. Various advices and ways to obtain quality communication in families were obtained. Generally, respondents displayed the characteristic of openness in a family. This characteristic will be able to tighten family relationship and reduce delinquency among adolescents.

All the respondents in this study stay with their families in Medan, Indonesia and. Every 2 respondents have a different background based on expertise. Among others, they are expert in the field of motivation and have organized many self-motivation programs for students and the general public. Besides that, the respondents in this study include academicians and they are lecturers and experts in the field of family communication. Furthermore, respondents have expertise in the field of Islamic religion whereby the study also looked from the Islamic perspective on ways to obtain quality communication in families.

### 4.1 Characteristics of quality communication in families

The results depicted here were based on some of the characteristics obtained from respondents A, B, C, D, E and F. The characteristics obtained were able to elaborate on the differences and similarities of family quality communication practiced in families as being mentioned by the respondents.

Respondent A an expert in the academic field stated that the characteristics of quality communication are openness, transparent, honesty, good relationship, mutual trust, showing respect, communicating like a friend,

doing activities and spending time together, exchanging opinions and sharing problems together. The statements given by respondents are as follows:

*"Quality communication must possess transparency, openness, honesty, and free flow. That is quality in communication. Never mind whether it is in the family context or anything else. Must have its channel, open, free flow on idea and honesty".*

## **4.2 Good relationship, trust and respectful are more important**

*"The way I talk to my child is not like a parent, but more like a friend, so not only as a mother but me also as a friend for my son. We are very open and honest and we can talk everything".*

*"Usually about hobby and enjoy together for example we like to watch football, we watch together and we can talk to each other and exchange information because we have the same interest".*

*"For me we have to give them opportunity to voice out meaning this is the space where they want to say something to us. We have to respond to each other".*

Respondent B who is an expert in the academic field mentioned that the characteristics of quality communication are that the message transmitted must be easily understood, a lot of discussion, listen as a friend, appropriate tone, clear and appropriate language, advice by giving stories on how to handle difficulties, using ICT to enquire about health and problems when far apart, to respect the way our children think, not to look down on children, to know about development in terms of mental and physical, establishing intimacy, convey clear message and establish strong family pillar based on the Islamic religion so that our children are religious. The views given by respondent B are as follows:

*"Communication, if we understand that it is a message transmitted from someone to another then that message is of quality".*

*"We have to do much discussion, we discuss because we respect due to the fact that he is able to communicate with us".*

*"...in communication there is listen, but we might listen to our adolescent children as a friend, want to explore him, do not assume his problem as menial, what he is saying is something special, something very important".*

*"...if we speak nowadays to an adolescent child, we cannot speak in a rough manner, small child also can be rough, the tone has to be soft...because Rasullullah S.A.W. spoke in a soft tone to his children, if you are very firm he will run away".*

*"...language must be clear, language does not tease, if you do not like something say that you do not like..."*

*"I make sure by asking how she is, I will get to know about her..., we write message that will touch her feelings, say I love u that will leave an impression to her. We advise her to study hard and relate to her our difficult experience to bring her up..."*

*"...if she had a problem we will discuss...we have a little discussion, we must not straight away scold, that is me, we have to follow her level, we have to respect her because she has grown up"*

*"We also need to take care of his development, in terms of his mental, physical...establish a cordial relationship and from this also our communication will be able to send the message to our children".*

*"Establish Islamic families, it is not easy you know... we will be able to establish pious children".*

Respondent C who is an expert in the field of motivation stated that quality communication characteristics in families exist when the expected impact is established, fair interaction, exist opportunity or space for rebut, non-prejudice, possess valid facts regarding politeness, focusing on Quran and Hadist, sincere, intelligent in expression, love, valid information, right timing, personal touch as a therapy, educate as friends, joke, and communicate with their friends, self-sanitary, current issues, take an interest on their child's hobby/future/and aim in life and providing conducive environment.

Respondent D explained that communication must be two ways, existence of emotional bridge, time need to

be accurate, to talk things that have basis, open dialogue, distinguish dialogue in the form of instruction or advise, usage of ICT technology, establish feelings of intimacy, diversity in communication, existence of convictions, to make choices or decisions, wide gap in age, to discuss about education, to motivate.

### **4.3 Identification of quality communication practices in families (problematic and none)**

Pattern the thinking so as past mistakes will not be repeated, daily activities, current issues, tighten family bond, allow children to have high self-confidence and love.

Respondent E who is an expert in the field of Islamic religion stated that these characteristics are represented by language that is effective, easily understood, non-verbal that is understood, mutual understanding, body language, different background based on age, different usage of language, current issues and tighten family relationships.

Respondent F who is also an expert in the field of Islamic religion mentioned that quality communication among families are ways to obtain messages or information effectively, from the perspective of dialogue, usage of language, types of information that need to be delivered, to talk on important things, problematic)

The data in this study discusses various practices that were obtained from the respondents A, B, C, D, E and F. The practices that were obtained will be able to explain quality communication among families that are practiced in today's families as mentioned by the respondents.

Respondent A described quality communication practiced by problematic and non-problematic families. This communication expert stated that we must communicate all the time with our children while having dinner, watching television, reading novel, watching movies, and communicating via e-mail and telephone. Besides that, parents need to sacrifice their time to be with their children and to make wise decisions, to understand the cause of the problem, how to overcome them, not to make assumption without checking and to give their children opportunity to voice out. Problems occur when parents do not have the time for their children and children do not have avenue to share problems.

Respondent B also stated that the practice was needed. The statement from Respondent B is similar with the statement of respondent A, we need to communicate more closely all times with our children. otherwise, there must be as much communication as possible based on needs that is while having dinner, discussing about hobbies, watching television, discussing about articles in the newspaper, through telephone and sms and while doing recreation activities together. Problematic families where there is less conversation, prejudice exists between two parties, putting all the blame solely on their children, and did not give any chance for their children to speak. Parents need to understand their children, help and advise them and the advice need to have response from their adolescent.

Respondent C described that the parents no need to talk a lot, sufficient an hour daily with their children. The children's mind are ready to communicate after waking up from sleep, while having tea together, after prayers and after recreational activities. Families need to communicate while eating together, recreation activities, watching television and shopping. On top of that, the usage of telephone, short messages (sms) and prayers as a bridge indirectly is also important for communication in families to occur. The other good deeds are through praying together, personal touch, and wave communication through prayers and using mediators.

Respondent D mentioned that the communication practice is subjective. Communication exists when the children have problems, after praying together and while having dinner, give letters to children to state their mistakes is also a quality communication because children will keep these letters and will not repeat their mistakes. On top of that, using third party to send a message is also appropriate in a communication. Good communication will be friendly and not tensed. The practice to overcome tension in family is through intention prayers whereby the father will pray with their children.

Respondent E stated that quality communication is during the weekend between one to two hours because children will have enough rest compared to a working day. Besides, while watching television together, recreational activities and through the telephone are also a good time for communication. Each family member needs to understand each other's problem, know how to overcome problems and good relationship between parents and children. Problems occur due to everyone being busy and children grow up on their own, having less love and attention.

Respondent F mentioned that the good practice is through communication once in a week or not frequent whereby then the things spoken are deemed important to be considered. Good practice should occur when watching television, while having a rest under a tree and having tea, going for a picnic, working cooperatively, doing recreational activities and attending functions together. The usage of ICT such as telephone and short messages (sms) are also important to create communication between family members. Parents need to be smart to adjust their communication, be smart to solve a problem besides identifying a problem before making a decision to create quality communication. To avoid problems from occurring, the way to communicate or giving advice must be appropriate. Parents need to recognize their children's activities, identify who are their friends and message can be transmitted through a third party if a conflict exists.

#### **4.4 Factors that contribute toward quality communication practice among families**

The data from this study discuss contributing factors toward quality communication practices among families as gathered from respondents A, B, C, D, E and F. The factors obtained will be able to elaborate on quality communication among families that is practiced today as depicted by the respondents to enhance quality communication.

Respondent A discussed that love, to respect children's needs, positive thinking, no problems to spend for children's education, the importance of parents knowledge towards the development of children are factors that contribute towards quality communication among families. Besides that, big families must visit one another, using the media appropriately and must know who their children's friends are. Communication is obstructed when there is someone else at home, different environment such as in school because in school the values infused are different.

Respondent B mentioned that these factors include possessing of parental education, economic status whereby a lower economy status will bring about an ineffective communication, preparing children's education needs for example computer and books, and ensuring their children attend motivation camp. When there are many children will use communication whereby when one is unhappy the others can help to cheer up the situation and to make sure no tense moments occur. Parents also need to know the development of their children, always self-improving, to understand their children's preference, how to motivate, effective listening skills and diversity in knowledge. Communication will be interfered when there is a maid. Thus, parent's needs to inform about the rules at home to their maid, avoid lying to children, other family members are also important contributors in giving advice, instruction to children. When the children are telling a story, parents should listen, getting something out of it and give advice when the story is unsuitable for their age. The culture in school is different whereby children will follow their teacher's and friend's ways and parents are the avenue to give advice on the good and the bad.

Respondent C discussed about the level of parents education that does not guarantee as a quality communication, low economy effect to be less communication, environment is important, being nice to neighbors are the contributors towards quality communication, the atmosphere at home is important whereby 80 percent is love and the rest is being firm, big families is also a contributor towards communication, media is a disruptor because there are many dramas that portray negative values and relatives who give advice to children is a noble contribution. The following factor is when parents and teachers are close with children, students' performance will enhance and indiscipline among students can be reduced because children will feel that they are being cared and respected. Parents also need to know who their children's friends are and not feel proud with them to discuss about a particular issue.

Respondent D mentioned that the factors have contribute toward communication practice is parents credibility, each home has a computer, every child owning a hand phone, harmonious family, no problems, trust among one another, a spacious house, conducive neighborhood, and a large family will help in quality communication. Parents are also sometimes unaware that their children have grown up and they need to educate their children according to current situation, tighten family relationship, reenter the world of children whereby parents will know their children's interests and understand who their friends are and to give advice their children's friends about the good and bad about a particular behavior. Communication is hindered when there are grandparents at home because parents are unable to scold or address their children directly.

Respondent E discussed briefly about the important factors whereby they are parent's education, a stable economy, conducive home, spacious house, good neighborhood, concerned parents, non-involvement of

grandparents, and appropriate usage of media, children having good friends, sharing the same interest and doing sports activities together.

Respondent F who is a religious expert from UMSU (University of Muhammadiyah Sumatra Utara) stated that the factors depend on the skills and this does not mean that the parents level of education is not important, plan financial effectively, comfortable living, good neighborhood, environment that is comfortable and conducive, good relationship, maid does not interfere during communication, non-interference from other people, appropriate usage of media whereby stories related to family and children are appropriate, teachers influence are important, parents need to know about their children in school, control their children in terms of their friends and parents need to follow the development of their children, that is, keeping an eye on them at all times.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study clearly show that there are differences in opinion in terms of educating children where by parents need to be sensitive towards every change that is occurring towards their adolescent children. Family communication is an important dimension towards the development of children. The adolescent period is a time whereby the combination of psychology, emotional and cognitive changes will confuse them. The change in role will make the process of message translation among adolescents become more complex.

Parents do have an important role in rearing their teenage children. Therefore, parents should understand and also be wiser concerning adolescent psychological period. Mainly, teenagers encounter a critical living phase within the age of 12 years-old and 21 years-old. At this stage, inner-conflicts do occur as they struggle to make a choice of life. Parents supposedly spending the best quality of time with their children by having an open discussion, sharing the ideas and never look down of their children's potential. There is apparently none of them who like to be underestimated. For all time the young person want to be respected and being cherished. There is a need for parents to put a great effort to be closer in their relationship with their teen. And, of course, the adolescent as well have to keep up the good bonding with their parents. Any problems arise should be countered in a rational mode as the small matters may contribute to the bigger problems. The adolescent must be more sensitive in making decision and remain good actions otherwise it may create conflicts with their parents. If possible, they may consult their colleagues or teachers who are possessing positive manners. Most of us could not expect that the teenagers will change in a day.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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