

# Parents' Perceptions on Adolescent's Romantic Relationships

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**Abstract—** Parents' perception about the romantic relationships among the early adolescents (Middle School) has become an interesting phenomenon in which this will bring some impacts on their parenting patterns. For parents, dating phenomenon among early adolescents then comes to be a dilemma. They are facing two decisions: allowing or prohibiting their middle-school-age children to do so. In one hand, if it is prohibited, the parents are worried if their child will choose to have a *backstreet* relationship, consequently making such condition getting worse. On the other hand, if allowing, the parents are worried that their children are unable to control themselves and this would make their romantic relationship progresses differently as expected and negatively brings an impact on their studies. The different parents' perception about the adolescent dating, in turn, will determine their parenting patterns to their child that has or has not started dating. Observing the parenting patterns to early adolescents (at Middle School) comes to be interesting then. This research involved 123 parents in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A number of questions were given to the parents in relation to their perception about dating, things they do in parenting their child that has and has not started dating. The data analysis was conducted using the mixed descriptive-quantitative and qualitative method. The results of this research showed that parents had a perception about the adolescent dating and identified some parenting acts of parents towards the adolescents having and not having a romantic relationship.

**Keywords—** parents, romantic relationship, middle-school-age students

## I. INTRODUCTION

For adolescents, one of decisions they must have in terms of inter-gender relationship is to have a date or not. The perception about the dating concept has changed along with the development of generation in which the today dating behavior is getting more unrestricted and permissive with the much earlier onset [1]. *Romantic relationship* is defined as an on-going voluntary interaction with a mutual

acknowledgement and typical intensity commonly characterized with the affectionate expression that might involve a sexual behavior [2]. Furman and Shaffer [3] stated that *romantic relationships* among adolescents can last temporarily and narrowly; however, such relationship might play an important role in the teenage lives, stimulate a very strong emotion, bring a significant impact on both health and self-adaptation [4].

The phenomenon of adolescent dating (Middle-school-age children) becomes a dilemma for parents. It goes awry for parents to decide whether they should allow their middle-school-age child to start dating. In one hand, if they prohibit their child, the parents are worried if the child will choose to have a backstreet relationship; consequently, making it worse. On the other hand, if their child is allowed to start dating, it is worried that the child is unable to control him/herself and this romantic relationship will get more intense; eventually badly disrupting his/her studies. At this point, the different perspective of parents about romantic relationship at the middle school age determining the parenting patterns as well as the implementation of rules in the family is a subject interesting to be studied.

Perception about the adolescents dating is different between western and non-western culture. In the west, people agree with the *romantic relationship* among adolescents for being seen as a part of task in adolescent development [5, 6, 3]. In contrast, the non-western culture has a different perception [7, 8]. However, the globalizing west culture undeniably has brought an impact on the culture in the non-western countries and internalized the adolescence concept in those countries about romantic relationship. A number of researchers in eastern countries assumed that there has been a shift in the adolescence concept from previously holding the original tradition to western culture [8] adopted through any various media [9].

The role of media such as television, magazine, songs, and social media on internet has made the *passionate love* popular, later on creating a freedom among adolescents in choosing a partner. The adolescents have a way to adapt the local culture to others they accept with an aim to make it suitable with their needs [6]. Having a romantic relationship seems to be undeniable among adolescents considering that the adolescence age range to marriage phase is still far. More adult persons postpone their marriage in which even though they have made a romantic relationship, it does not guarantee that their relation can run well or will be ended in a marriage.

This research aims to observe the perception of parents about inter-gender relationship in relation to the rules implemented by parents in parenting their middle-school-age children associating with peer of the opposite sex, the reasons of parents not allowing their middle-school child to start dating, behavior of middle-school-age students allowed to have a romantic relationship and the behavior of those prohibited to do so.

The issues about the parent's perception towards the inter-gender relationship and dating behavior need to be studied as the adolescent behavior today has become a matter that needs to be concerned particularly for the viability of a nation in future. The inter-gender relationship has brought some impacts on adolescents in their social life and personality to be mature, strong, tough and supple or otherwise. Meanwhile, the romantic relationship for adolescents at beginning seems to start a car without having a driving skill, and through the positive experience and guidance the adolescents gradually learn how to control the car and him/herself to reach the destination without any worry of a risk [10]. Adolescents can face any challenges to obtain the romantic skills directly through their experience when choosing to have a date. Conversely, postponing to have a romantic relationship until being adult or even not to have it at all before getting married is also a choice for an adolescent for more concentrating energy on school activities, doing sport or other positive and beneficial activities.

## II. METHODS

Collecting data on the inter-gender relationship was conducted using the *open-ended questionnaires* containing the open questions as the results of the adaptation from the questionnaires. The questionnaires is one of instruments from the *Indigenous Psychology* method used to learn the behavior in accordance with the local culture context [11].

A number of questions proposed were to reveal the parents' perception about the inter-gender relationship, perception about permission or prohibition for the middle-school-age students to have a romantic relationship and the rules on the permission and prohibition to those students to have a date. The data obtained were then analyzed using the cross tabulation by inputting the processed quantitative data and quantified qualitative data. 123 parents of students from four junior high schools in Yogyakarta were involved as the research subjects determined based upon: State Junior High School, Private Junior High schools, and Islamic Junior High Schools (MTs). The technique in collecting data was

by using the open-ended questionnaires and data analysis was by using the descriptive-quantitative analysis.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The results of the research about the parents' perception about the inter-gender relationship and the dating concept among the middle-school-age students were started with the instrument preparation discussed in a round-table discussion in research group. The results of data collection from the parents of students in four Junior High Schools in Sleman Regency included: a) data on the rules implemented by parents in parenting their children in associating with the peers of the opposite sex, b) data on the consideration or reasons of parents to prohibit their middle-school-age child to start dating, c) data on the allowed behaviors if the middle-school-age students have started dating and d) data on the prohibited behaviors if the middle-school-age students have started dating. The data were then processed and analyzed using the qualitative-descriptive method and quantitative-descriptive method. The data from the research results were then presented as follows:

1. Rules implemented by parents in parenting their middle-school-age children to associate with the peers of opposite sex. It was found that 98.4% parents implemented the rules telling about what their middle-school-age children should do in associating with the peers of opposite sex:

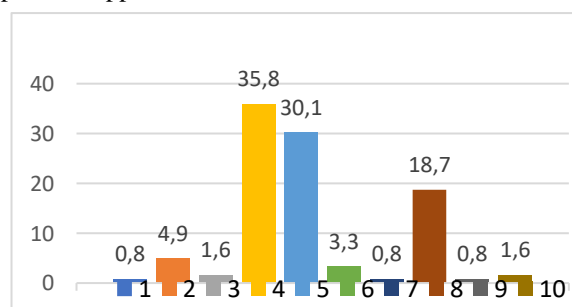


Fig. 1. Rules Implemented by Parents to Parenting Their Middle-School-Age Children to Associate with the Peer of Opposite Sex

### Remarks:

1. Explaining the detailed rules in association.
  2. Prohibiting to associate with peers of opposite sex.
  3. Monitoring the association with peers of opposite sex.
  4. Limiting the association with peers of opposite sex.
  5. Giving an advice.
  6. Monitoring the association of their children.
  7. Keeping their reputation in making association.
  8. Associating only with friends.
  9. Being selective in making association.
  10. Prohibiting to go alone with peer of opposite sex.
2. Reasons of parents not allow their middle-school-age child to have a date. 92.7% parents were found not allowing the child to have a date.

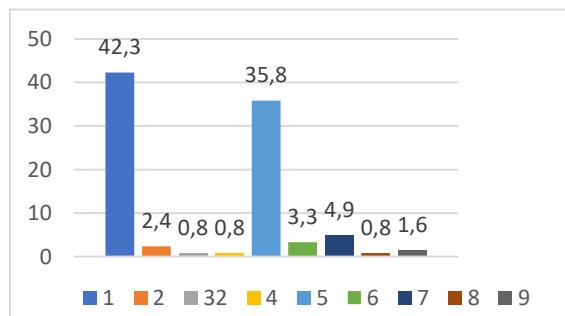


Fig. 2. Reasons of Parents to not Allow Their Middle-School-Age Child to Have a Date

Remarks:

1. Mutual cooperation for learning motivation.
  2. Associating with more than 2 persons.
  3. Using social media.
  4. Just as a friend.
  5. Only meeting in school.
  6. Positive behaviors.
  7. Open.
  8. Not violating the religious norms.
  9. Answers not suitable with questions.
3. The allowed behaviors of middle-school-age students having a romantic relationship. Figure 3 presents a number of allowed behaviors of middle-school-age students having a romantic relationship.

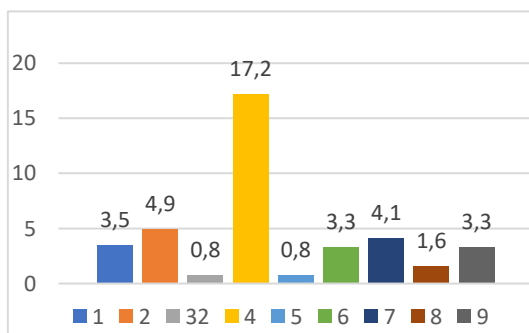


Fig. 3. Allowed Behaviors of Middle-School-Age Students Having a Romantic Relationship

Remarks:

1. Being underage.
  2. Unable to control emotion and reasoning.
  3. Still single.
  4. Still being unstable.
  5. Disrupting the concentration in study.
  6. Disrupting future.
  7. Prohibited by religion.
  8. Dating is unnecessary.
  9. Answers not suitable with question.
4. The prohibited behaviors of middle-school-age students that have a romantic relationship include.

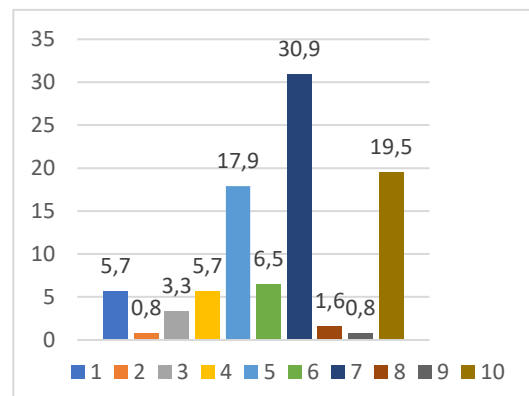


Fig. 4. Prohibited behaviors of middle-school-age students that have a romantic relationship

Remark:

1. Being closer and having physical contact.
2. Still in reasonableness.
3. having a backstreet relationship.
4. violating the religious norms.
5. being transgressive.
6. doing promiscuity.
7. going out alone with the peer of opposite sex.
8. having a risky behavior.
9. excessive behavior to the peer of opposite sex.
10. Answers not suitable with question.

Discussion

Based on the data on the aspect of rules implemented by parents in parenting their middle-school-age child in terms of the association with the peer of opposite sex, it was mostly in restricting their child to associate with the peer of opposite sex (35,8%), giving an advice (30,1%) and associating only with a friend (18,7%). It then explains that the age of middle-school child is in the social development of adolescent in which the association and social interaction with the peers are getting more extended and more complex in comparison to the previous times including in the association with the peer of opposite sex. It also occurs in the typical emotion development today called as *storm and stress/heightened emotionality*, a period describing an uncertain, unstable and explosive emotionality. The increasing sensitivity of emotion is more frequently manifested into being bad-tempered, seclusive and commonly being nervous such as being restless, anxious, sentimental, frequently biting the nails and scratching the head. This consideration is assumed as the parents' reasons to implement and restrict the association of their middle-school-age children.

In terms of the aspect for the parents' reasons to not allow their middle-school-age child to have a romantic relationship, there were three main reasons including *still underage* (42,3%), *disrupting the concentration in study* (35,8%), and *prohibited by religion* (4,9%). This can be explained that the adolescence at the middle-school age is seen not the right time to know about romantic relationship and there is a worry that it could disrupt the concentration on study. Moreover, in religion – particularly in Islam, the

dating concept in terms of associating with the peer of opposite sex is unacceptable though at the early adolescence (middle-school age), the emotional development among adolescents, along with the sexual maturation, starts coming out to the peer of opposite sex – mostly termed as fall in love.

Based on the data on the aspect of the middle-school-age students allowed to have the romantic relationship, it was found three main behaviors allowed by the parents including: *mutual cooperating for learning motivation* (22,8%), *as a friend* (17,1%), and *being open* (4,1%). It explains that parents allow their child to have a romantic relationship for the motivation and cooperation in study, mutually stimulating the learning achievement and the relationship built is just in friendship, and more open to parents and friends.

From the data on the aspect of the prohibited behaviors of the middle-school-age students that have a romantic relationship, there were three main rules prohibiting the child to do: going alone with the partner (30.9%), being promiscuous in association (17.9%), and doing promiscuity. This could be understood as parents are worried with the dating style of today adolescents that can emerge many problems for themselves, parents and people surrounding and no exception the middle-school-age students that have had a date. Here, 92.7% parents prohibit their child to have a romantic relationship.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results of this research showed a number of conclusions: 1) 98.4% parents have implemented rules stating about what things the middle-school-age students should obey in associating with peer of opposite sex. The rules mostly were to restrict their middle-school-age child to be associated with the peer of opposite sex, give an advice and dan restrict the association only as friend, 2) 92.7% parents prohibited their child to have a romantic relationship considering three main reasons: being underage, disrupting the concentration for study, and prohibited by religion,

3) The allowed behaviors of middle-school-age students that have a romantic relationship include: mutual cooperation for learning motivation, associated only as a friend, and being open, 4) the prohibited behaviors of middle-school-age students that have had a romantic relationship included going out alone with the partner, being promiscuous in association and doing promiscuity.

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