

Parenting Skill in the Advent of Early Adolescence

Chanram Ruanpan *

Introduction

Family is a basic social institution which plays an important part in human life and society. Although its necessary functions in birth-giving and newborn-nurturing are widely accepted, any changes in the surrounding society can affect the family. In modern society, a tremendous impact of change can make families become more feeble, and parents in feeble families are likely unable to effectively fulfill their parental duties. Evidence of this situation can be seen from news, researches, and annual reports that have recently appeared. Among children, some of the signs of the negative impact of change include a continually decreasing intelligence quotient (I.Q.) and level of development (Chanpen, 2000), while deviant and inappropriate child behavior is becoming more and more violent (Pracha, 2003). Children themselves are being exposed to more violence and abuse within the family, much of which is being committed by their own parents (Pornrudee, 1997: 1). So much change and so many problems means scores of parents do not know how to help their children grow up to be good members or to survive in present society (Thailand Research Fund, 2000). These are all serious problems which need attention in order to find solutions that will help families thrive.

Although problems in parenting can emerge at any phase of child development, the adolescent stage is considered the most difficult and therefore critical (Chanthana, 1994: 16; Duangkamol, 1990: 18; Pantip, 1994: 30). In this period, most problems are conflict and misunderstanding between parents and children rooted from changes of the adolescent, their middle-aged parents, and the situations around them.

* Rajabath Suandusit University, 295 Rajasima Road, Dusit District, Bangkok 10300, Thailand.
E-mail: rchanram@yahoo.com

Since rapid social and cultural changes has mostly occurred in the urban rather than the rural setting, Bangkok, which is the highest in urbanization level, might be effected by these changes much more than other areas in the country.

Because this research has a unit of analysis at the couple level, a conceptual framework of this study is an assemblage of Role Theory and Family System Theory in order to generate an understanding of joint parenting between father and mother as well as an influence of family context on parenting practice. From related literature, “parenting” refers to a role performed by a person who possesses parental status in order to suitably and positively enhance development in every aspect of their child’s life (Morrison, 1978 cited by Hamner & Turner, 1990: 5; Davidson & Moore, 1996: 554), while “parenting skill” refers to an ability of parents to efficiently practice all aspects of parental duties until the child’s physical and psychological needs are being suitably met without conflict among them (Shaw & Costanzo, 1982: 296).

From Role Theory (Sarbin & Allen, 1968) parenting skill is a consequence of individual learning from the past and the present in parenting related areas. As a result, an individual can obtain knowledge and understanding of the development and demands of children at each age, as well as parental duties in child development facilitation (Coleman & Karraker, 2000: 13). However, parenting practice could not be solely explained by individual factors, but by considering the surrounding context or family’s atmosphere as well. Since parenting is the result of a combination between the father’s role and the mother’s role, factors at the couple level which are related to parenting skill are: (1) “interparental agreement”, a concept which refers to the process by which father and mother combine their parenting-related knowledge until suitable guidelines for joint parenting between them were obtained; (2) “family stress”, a concept which refers to the negative atmosphere within the family which could decrease parenting efficiency; and (3) “family resources”, a concept which refers to various things the family possesses and can use in case of need for problem solving as well as for increasing effective parenting practices.

Research Objectives

1. To study the current situation of early adolescent parenting among families in the research area
2. To study the process of early adolescent parenting among couples in the research area
3. To explain the meaning of parenting skills and factors related to parenting skills in the research area
4. To recommend methods of parenting skill development in the research area based on research findings

Research Methodology

The main objective of this research was to study the process of early adolescent parenting of 20 couples in the Rajathewee district of Bangkok. As it was difficult to know which couples in the research area had early adolescent children, the researcher used Matthayom 2 (Grade 8) students in the research area, who were approximately 13-14 years old, as sources of information for accessibility to parents.

From a population of 1,792 students, 328 sample group students were randomly selected by using the random sampling table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970: 610) at the error level of 0.05 and reliability value of 95% for determining the sample size. Questionnaires were used with sample group students for quantitative data collection. The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics according to the level of measurement for the current situation of early adolescent parenting in the research area's explanation. The students' satisfaction on received parenting practice was used to identify the parenting skill tendency of their parents. To prevent the affect of other factors on parenting skill, the researcher adopted some variables such as economic status of the family, parents' education, family structure, etc. and used the Chi-square test to find a relationship between each variable and the students' satisfaction on received parenting practice. It was found that the economic status of the family was the

only variable which had a significant relationship with students' satisfaction. This means that the variable might have an affect on the variation of parenting skills in each family. In this case, variable control was conducted by using parenting skill tendency together with economic status of the family as criteria for categorizing and selecting parents.

Because joint parenting could emerge only in intact families where the father and the mother are still living and performing parental duties together, students in broken families were excluded in the step of categorizing parents. The students in intact families were classified into four groups according to parenting skill tendency and economic status of their family. The groups were: A) families with high parenting skill tendency and higher economic status; B) families with high parenting skill tendency and lower economic status; C) families with low parenting skill tendency and higher economic status; and D) families with low parenting skill tendency and lower economic status. After that, the sample group couples were equally selected by random sampling to prevent any bias from sample selection. Qualitative data was collected from sample group couples through in-depth interviews. The method of constant comparison was used for data analysis to reveal factors affecting the parenting skills of sample group couples.

Results

1. General information

The early adolescents used as sources of data for approaching their parents were 328 students in secondary schools in the research area. There were slightly more girls than boys. Most of them were between 13-14 years-old and had siblings of the same parents living with them in the same residence. However, more than half of them were the eldest child. Almost all students reported that their fathers and mothers were alive. Half of the fathers and the mothers were 40-49 years-old and had an education level of less than a bachelor's degree. The fathers' occupations and income were quite diverse and most of the mothers worked as well. It was found that more than half of the

students could travel between home and school by themselves. When arriving home, most of them were able to meet adults in the same residence immediately. Of those children, it was most often the mothers, particularly the housewives, whom they met after school, followed by relatives, usually grandparents. Most students were living with their father and mother in a nuclear family (a family with the parents and their children) or an extended family (a family with the parents, the children and their relatives). Among both kinds, which could be called an intact family, more than half of the families were in a high level of economic status when compared within group. (see Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of students classified by general information

General information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	171	52.1
Male	157	47.9
Age		
13	158	48.2
14	154	47.0
15	16	4.8
<i>(Max = 15, Min = 13, Mean = 13.5, S.D. = 0.59)</i>		
Siblings		
No sibling	77	23.5
Having siblings	246	75.0
Did not answer	5	1.5
Age of father		
30-39	43	13.1
40-49	178	54.3
50-59	42	12.8
60 and over	7	2.1
unknown	58	17.7
<i>(Max = 65, Min = 30, Mean = 44.81, S.D. = 6.16)</i>		
Age of mother		
30-39	98	29.9
40-49	162	49.4
50-59	25	7.6
60 and over	-	-
Unknown	43	13.1
<i>(Max = 57, Min = 26, Mean = 41.79, S.D. = 5.71)</i>		

Table 1: (Continued)

General information	Frequency	Percentage
Education of father		
Under bachelor degree	196	59.8
- Primary	77	23.5
- Secondary	81	24.7
- Vocational / equivalent	38	11.6
Bachelor degree or higher	97	29.6
Unknown	35	10.6
Education of mother		
Under bachelor degree	212	64.6
- Primary	104	31.7
- Secondary	79	24.1
- Vocational / equivalent	29	8.8
Bachelor degree or higher	83	25.3
Unknown	33	10.1
Occupation of father		
Employed worker	78	23.8
Professional	73	22.3
Merchant	64	19.5
Private company/business	52	15.9
Others	23	7.0
Unknown	38	11.5
Occupation of mother		
Employed worker	65	19.8
Professional	42	12.8
Merchant	71	21.7
Private company/business	32	9.8
Housewife	103	31.4
Unknown	15	4.6
Income of father (monthly)		
Lower than 10,000 Baht	19	5.8
10,001-20,000 Baht	32	9.8
20,001-30,000 Baht	10	3.0
More than 30,001 Baht	32	9.8
Unknown	235	71.6
<i>(Max = 350,000, Min = 4,000, Mean = 35009.68, S.D. = 48698.52)</i>		

Table 1: (Continued)

General information	Frequency	Percentage
Income of mother (monthly)		
None	40	12.2
Lower than 10,000 Baht	28	8.5
10,001-20,000 Baht	33	10.1
20,001-30,000 Baht	15	4.6
More than 30,001 Baht	13	4.0
Unknown	199	60.7
(Max = 200,000, Min = 4,000, Mean = 24568.07, S.D. = 31326.36)		
How to get to school		
Alone	184	56.1
Alone and taken by parent	69	21.0
Taken by parent	72	22.0
Did not answer	3	0.9
Chance to meet adult in the same household		
Immediately (taken by parent)	72	22.0
Immediately when arriving home	207	63.1
1-2 hours after arriving home	32	9.8
More than 1-2 hours	5	1.5
Did not answer	12	3.7
Family's characteristic		
Intact family	259	78.9
- Nuclear	172	52.4
- Extended	87	26.5
Broken family	69	21.1
Family members		
2-3 persons	45	13.7
4-6 persons	188	57.3
7-9 persons	51	15.5
More than 10 persons	33	10.1
Others	11	3.4
Economic status		
Low	6	1.8
Moderate	121	36.9
High	189	57.9
Did not answer	11	3.4

2. Current situation of parenting early adolescents in the research area

Data from the sample group students revealed that most of them still resided with and were raised by their parents. The person who played the most significant part in parenting was the mother. In nuclear families, the adolescents who had to take care of themselves were more than those in extended families where the relatives could help with some parts of parental roles. As for adolescents in broken families, the guardians, i.e., single mothers, single fathers, relatives, or the officers in foster homes, would be the first person in caretaking, followed by the children who took care of themselves (see Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of students classified by guardians in 3 respective orders.

Guardians	Intact family		Broken family (n = 69)	Total (n = 328)
	Nuclear (n = 172)	Extended (n = 87)		
First order				
Father	27.9	29.9	7.2	24.1
Mother	62.2	50.6	42.0	54.8
Father & mother	5.2	8.0	1.5	5.2
Elder/relative	1.7	11.5	30.4	10.4
Non-relative	0.6	-	14.4	3.4
Step- father/mother	-	-	1.5	0.3
Oneself	2.4	-	3.0	1.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Second order				
Father	59.9	44.9	10.1	45.4
Mother	28.5	31.0	7.2	24.8
Father & mother	-	1.1	-	0.6
Elder/relative	4.7	23.0	46.4	18.0
Non-relative	1.7	-	4.4	1.8
Step- father/mother	-	-	1.5	0.3
Oneself	5.2	-	30.4	9.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Third order				
Father	4.1	9.2	-	4.6
Mother	0.6	4.6	4.4	2.4
Father & mother	-	-	-	-
Elder/relative	42.4	60.9	42.0	47.2
Non-relative	1.2	8.0	4.4	3.7
Step- father/mother	-	-	-	-
Oneself	51.7	17.3	49.2	42.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Oneself refers to the students who took care of themselves.

In general, parenting practice could be divided into four aspects: (1) activities for enhancing physical development, involving many kinds of necessary provisions for the children's quality of life; (2) activities for enhancing psychological/emotional development which strengthened children's spiritual stability; (3) activities for enhancing social development, cultivating children to become better members of society; (4) activities for enhancing intellectual development, involving encouragement for the children to develop themselves until readiness for future independent living. Each family had different procedures in practicing these activities. In the research, 36 activities related to the four areas of parenting were identified and the students were asked to indicate which ones were included in the parenting practice they received and by whom it was practiced (see Table 3). It was found that family members practiced most activities with children rather than non-relatives (teachers, friends, etc.) or even children practicing them on their own.

In the physical aspect, the key person in all activities practiced was the mother, followed by collaboration between the father and mother. Activities which more than 20 per cent of students practiced by themselves included taking care of physical hygiene, doing exercises, ensuring sufficient rest, and healing themselves from common sicknesses. There was a small number of activities not practiced (not more than 10 per cent of all activities). Reasons for not-practiced activities, such as trips to the dentist or encouraging exercise, included physical changes at early adolescence.

In the psychological/emotional aspect, the activity which more than 80 per cent of family members practiced with the children was counseling with school studies. It was also found that the mother was the key person in all activities practiced, followed by collaboration between the father and mother. The activities most students practiced by themselves were taking care of themselves in round-trip travel between home and school and buying unnecessary things. The students who identified activities not-practiced were low in number (not more than 15 per cent in all activities) and most commonly included counseling on conflicts with family members and buying unnecessary things.

In the social aspect, there were 10 activities which were practiced by more than 80 per cent of family members. These activities were: giving instructions on how to be a good person, taking children to visit relatives, giving instructions on how to behave and be mannerly, training them in housework, traveling for recreation together, bringing them to the temple for sermons, giving guidance about proper spending, punishment, encouraging them in socially beneficial activities, and leading them in religious rites such as offering food to Buddhist priests in the morning. In this group of activities, the key person in practicing was the mother, followed by collaboration between father and mother, except with some kinds of activities which had to be practiced together, such as traveling or spending time together for recreation. As for activities about how to be a good person, it was found in most families that these were practiced by collaboration between father and mother, followed by the mother alone. The activities which the children practiced by themselves, from highest to lowest, were: taking care of themselves in association with friends, watching television, listening to the radio, playing games, doing activities for recreation or hobbies, participating in clubs or assemblies, and taking care of themselves in money spending. The number of families in which certain activities were not practiced was low (less than 15 per cent of all activities). When compared within the group, the highest not-practiced activities were punishment, leading children in religious rites, looking after the children in association with friends, bringing them to the temple for sermons, doing activities for recreation together, and encouraging them in club or assembly participation.

In the intellectual aspect, there were two activities which more than 80 per cent of family members practiced with the children. They were: encouraging the child's study, which was mostly practiced by the father and followed by the mother, and encouraging the child's extra study after class, which was mostly practiced by the mother and followed by collaboration between the father and the mother. As for the activities which the children practiced by themselves, the most in percentage were planning for their own education or future career and taking care of themselves in homework and lesson revision. The number of families where some activities were not practiced was low (less than 10 per cent in all activities). The highest not-practiced

activities were encouraging children's extra study after class, supervising homework and lesson revision, and planning children's education and future career.

Table 3: Percentage of students classified by activities for early adolescent development facilitation and the responsible person

Activities	The responsible person									
	Family member							Children	Without practice	Outsider
	Parents	Father	Mother	Relatives	Employee	Several	Total			
Physical aspect										
1. preparing food	13.7	2.1	42.4	7.0	3.7	12.2	81.1	15.9	0.0	3.0
2. ensuring sufficient nutrition	15.9	7.0	40.9	6.4	0.3	11.6	82.1	12.2	3.0	2.7
3. ensuring physical hygiene	12.5	2.4	31.1	3.4	0.0	5.5	54.9	41.8	0.6	2.7
4. explanation about physical changes	13.4	10.4	33.8	7.0	0.0	9.8	74.3	11.0	9.8	4.9
5. Laundry	4.3	3.0	36.9	6.1	14.9	4.3	69.6	27.7	0.6	2.1
6. looking after when sick	15.5	7.6	36.6	4.3	0.0	8.5	72.6	25.0	0.3	2.1
7. taking to visit doctor when seriously ill	29.3	18.0	32.6	5.5	0.0	9.8	95.1	0.6	0.3	4.0
8. taking to visit dentist	18.6	14.6	41.5	3.7	0.0	6.4	84.8	3.0	8.5	3.7
9. ensuring exercise	13.1	17.1	13.4	7.6	0.0	4.6	55.7	33.5	8.2	2.4
10. ensuring enough rest	20.7	8.5	30.5	3.7	0.0	8.8	72.3	24.7	1.2	1.8
11. buying necessities	17.7	6.1	47.9	4.9	1.2	6.7	84.5	12.2	0.6	2.7
Psychological/Emotional aspect										
1. buying unnecessary things	8.5	12.8	14.9	7.9	0.0	5.2	49.4	39.0	10.4	1.2
2. taking care of travel between home and school	14.9	14.9	17.1	2.7	0.3	4.3	54.3	39.3	4.6	1.8
3. counseling on study	19.5	13.1	24.4	12.2	0.0	15.2	84.4	3.7	4.9	7.0
4. counseling on conflict with friends	14.6	7.3	28.0	11.3	0.3	11.0	72.6	10.7	8.8	7.9
5. counseling on conflict with family members	21.3	7.0	27.1	6.4	0.0	10.7	72.6	8.2	11.6	7.6
Social aspect										
1. discipline/punishment	19.2	20.4	32.3	4.6	0.0	7.6	84.1	0.0	11.9	4.0
2. monitoring TV- watching, radio- listening and games- playing	19.5	8.2	34.5	4.6	0.0	7.6	74.4	17.1	5.8	2.7
3. taking care of association with friends	14.9	5.5	29.3	6.4	0.0	5.5	61.6	27.4	9.5	1.5
4. guiding money spending	23.8	9.8	34.8	6.1	0.0	11.0	85.4	10.1	2.4	2.1

Table 3: (Continued)

Activities	The responsible person									
	Family member							Children	Without practice	Outsider
	Parents	Father	Mother	Relatives	Employee	Several	Total			
5. instructing for being a good citizen	39.3	5.2	22.3	2.4	0.0	25.0	94.3	2.4	0.3	3.0
6. instructing how to behave and be mannerly	29.0	3.7	33.8	7.3	0.0	18.6	92.4	3.0	0.9	3.7
7. housework training	16.5	4.9	47.9	6.7	0.3	13.1	89.4	5.2	2.7	2.7
8. doing activities together	23.2	9.1	13.7	7.3	0.0	19.8	73.2	16.5	7.6	2.7
9. going traveling together	35.4	13.7	16.2	7.3	0.0	15.5	88.1	4.9	2.7	4.3
10. taking to visit relatives	41.2	15.2	25.0	4.6	0.0	8.2	94.3	0.9	2.7	2.1
11. leading in religious rites	23.8	4.9	35.7	8.5	0.0	9.8	82.6	2.7	11.0	3.7
12. taking to temple for sermon	31.1	7.9	26.5	8.5	0.0	12.8	86.9	1.5	8.2	3.4
13. encouraging child's hobby	22.9	13.7	19.8	7.6	0.0	13.1	77.1	14.3	4.6	4.0
14. encouraging child's participation in clubs/ assemblies	22.3	14.6	24.4	4.3	0.0	10.7	76.2	12.5	7.3	4.0
15. encouraging child's social activity	32.3	8.2	22.0	5.2	0.0	15.5	83.1	9.8	3.4	3.7
Intellectual aspect										
1. encouraging child's study	39.0	9.8	22.3	5.8	0.0	16.8	93.6	0.9	1.5	4.0
2. encouraging child in extra study after class	24.1	9.8	32.6	8.5	0.0	7.6	82.7	6.4	8.8	2.1
3. looking after homework and lesson revision	16.5	7.6	28.0	7.3	0.0	7.6	67.1	26.5	4.9	1.5
4. explaining when the child does not understand homework or lesson	12.2	14.6	16.2	25.9	0.0	10.7	79.6	8.8	7.0	4.6
5. planning for education and future career	23.5	8.5	15.5	3.7	0.0	9.1	60.4	31.1	6.7	1.8

In this study, students were asked to express their satisfaction on the parenting practices they received. The child's satisfaction was separated into three levels: high, moderate and low (see Table 4). It was found that there was a higher proportion of children with moderate levels of satisfaction in intact families in all aspects, while there was a high proportion of children with low levels of satisfaction in broken families in two aspects: the general and psychological/emotional aspects.

When each aspect of parenting was considered, it was found that children’s satisfaction was mostly in the moderate level in all aspects except among psychological/emotional activities, where the proportion of children in each satisfaction level was more or less equal. This meant that parenting practice differed most in the psychological aspect. When considering family type, it was found that the satisfaction of students in the intact family was similar to the students of both family type. As for the broken family, it was found that child’s satisfaction, particularly in the psychological/emotional aspect, was mostly at the low level. This meant that parenting practice in the intact family better met the psychological needs of children than in the broken family.

Table 4: Percentage of students classified by level of satisfaction on received parenting practice and family’s characteristic.

Satisfaction level	Family’s characteristic		Total (N=328)
	Intact family (N=259)	Broken family (N=69)	
In general			
High	32.0	23.2	30.2
Moderate	41.4	34.8	39.9
Low	26.6	42.0	29.9
Physical aspect			
High	29.3	23.2	28.0
Moderate	52.6	43.5	50.7
Low	18.1	33.3	21.3
Psychological/emotional aspect			
High	34.4	26.1	32.6
Moderate	37.4	33.3	36.6
Low	28.2	40.6	30.8
Social aspect			
High	32.4	21.7	30.2
Moderate	39.4	50.0	40.5
Low	28.2	33.3	29.3
Intellectual aspect			
High	20.8	20.3	20.7
Moderate	52.6	56.5	53.4
Low	26.6	23.2	25.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to the students, qualities of a good parent during adolescence include being understanding, attentive, reasonable, instructive and allowing independence (see Table 5).

Table 5: Percentage of students classified by opinion on characteristics of good parents for early adolescent

First order	%	Second order	%	Third order	%
Understanding	47.0	Understanding	18.9	Understanding	13.7
Attentive care	10.5	Independent	14.0	Being instructive	13.0
Being reasonable	10.2	allowance		Attentive care	11.4
Independent	7.6	Being reasonable	12.6	Independent	8.6
allowance		Attentive care	8.7	allowance	
Being instructive	6.0	Being instructive	8.0	Parent's personality	7.8
Affectionate	4.6	Counsel given	8.0	Being reasonable	7.0
Parent's personality	3.6	Parent's personality	6.6	Counsel given	7.0
Counsel given	3.3	Affectionate	4.5	Affectionate	5.5
Being helpful	2.0	Being justice	3.5	Not over-anxious	4.8
Being justice	1.3	Being helpful	3.2	Non-violent	4.3
Being a role model	1.0	Time given	3.6	punishment	
Courteous speech	1.0	Not over-anxious	2.8	Courteous speech	4.3
Time given	1.0	Non-violence	2.4	Time given	4.3
Not over-anxious	0.6	punishment		Being assistant	3.9
Parents' cohesion	0.3	Courteous speech	2.4	Being a role model	2.0
		Sufficient money	0.4	Being justice	1.6
		given		Parents' cohesion	0.4
		Being a role model	0.4	Sufficient money	0.4
				given	

It is interesting to note that most adolescents, in both intact and broken families, indicated their parents or guardians only possessed some of the above qualities. Among the intact families, the mothers most often had more of the qualities than the fathers (see Table 6).

Table 6: Percentage of students classified by family's characteristic and their opinion on characteristics of good parents possessed by their parents or guardian

Characteristics of good parents (N=271)	Intact Families		Broken Families		
	Father (N=214)	Mother (N=214)	Father (N=10)	Mother (N=28)	Guardian (N=19)
Possessed all	31.8	38.3	10.0	39.3	31.6
Possessed some	64.5	58.8	90.0	57.1	52.6
Possessed none	3.7	2.9	-	3.6	15.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: data in the table was from 271 respondents, which was less than total number of the sample group students (the remaining 57 students did not answer this question).

3. Process of early adolescent parenting of the sample group couples

By using child's satisfaction on received parenting practice as an indicator of parenting skill tendency in each family, students in intact family were classified into four groups according to parenting skill tendency and economic status. In each group, five parents of the students were randomly selected and were interviewed in-depth for qualitative data collection.

From the findings, the process of joint parenting between the father and the mother started from discussion between them. Issues for discussion changed with child development and problems which occasionally arose in their families. In the process of discussion, related knowledge of each party was revised and applied until suitable guidelines for a specific situation in their family was obtained. Therefore, parenting practice in each family was varied due to the restrictive conditions of each family and the difference of each couple's knowledge on parenting practice.

Each couple's related knowledge on parenting practice came from a combination of past experiences, current practice, and knowledge sought or gained from various sources. How to use the knowledge effectively depended on the abilities of the couple in perception, selection, and application, which affected the parenting guideline they chose for their family. The couple proceeded with the guideline using joint parenting and the result was joint learning – including their ability to evaluate how well they carried out the guideline. If perceived outcome was far different from expectations, the couple tended to readjust the guideline for better results. Since the parents had immense changes and new situations to face all the time, the adaptive parents likely achieved more satisfactory outcomes.

When comparing the ways parental activities were practiced (see Table 7), it was found that the families with high parenting skill tendency (A and B) obviously applied more activities than families with low parenting skill tendency (C and D). When the economic status of the family was included in the comparison, it was found that only the families with high parenting skill tendency and upper economic status (A) applied all activities completely, while in the families with low parenting skill tendency and lower economic status (D), some activities were left out in the highest proportion.

Table 7: Comparison on activities for early adolescent development facilitation in each family type

Activities	Do not practice				Take care of oneself				Practice by family member			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Physical aspect												
1. preparing food	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	5	4	5
2. ensuring sufficient nutrition	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	5	5	4	4
3. ensuring physical hygiene	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3
4. explanation about physical changes	-	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	5	4	2	3
5. Laundry	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	5	2	5	5
6. looking after when sick	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	4	4	3	4
7. taking to visit doctor when seriously ill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
8. taking to visit dentist	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	3
9. ensuring exercise	-	-	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
10. ensuring enough rest	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	4	4	4	5
11. buying necessities	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	3	5	5

Table 7: (Continued)

Activities	Do not practice				Take care of oneself				Practice by family member			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Psychological/Emotional aspect												
1. buying acquired unnecessary thing	-	-	-	2	3	2	3	1	2	3	2	2
2. taking care of travel between home and school	-	-	1	2	1	4	4	1	4	1	-	2
3. counseling on study	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	-	5	4	3	3
4. counseling on conflict with friends	-	-	1	2	1	1	2	-	4	4	2	3
5. counseling on conflict with family members	-	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	5	4	1	4
Social aspect												
1. discipline/punishment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
2. monitoring TV-watching, radio-listening and games- playing	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	4	5	4	4
3. taking care of association with friends	-	1	-	2	2	-	3	1	3	4	2	2
4. guiding money spending	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	5	4	5
5. instructing for being a good citizen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
6. instructing how to behave and be mannerly	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
7. housework training	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
8. doing activities together	-	1	3	3	-	-	-	-	5	4	2	2
9. going traveling together	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	4
10. taking to visit relatives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
11. leading in religious rites	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	4
12. taking to temple for sermon	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	4
13. encouraging child's hobby	-	-	1	1	-	2	2	1	5	3	2	3
14. encouraging child's participation in clubs/ assemblies	-	-	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	3	1	2
15. encouraging child's social activity	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	1	5	4	2	3
Intellectual aspect												
1. encouraging child's study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	5	5
2. encouraging child in extra study after class	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	5	5	4	3
3. looking after homework and lesson revision	-	1	1	2	2	-	1	-	3	4	3	3
4. explaining when the child does not understand homework or lesson	-	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	5	5	3	2
5. planning for education and future career	-	-	1	1	3	2	3	1	2	3	1	3

Notes: 1. A is families with high parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 B is families with high parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 C is families with low parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 D is families with low parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 2. Data in the table are the numbers of couples in each family type.

The findings showed adolescents in a family with high parenting skill tendency (A and B) were “equally satisfied” with past or present received parenting practice or “more satisfied” with present parenting practice. On the other hand, most adolescents in a family with low parenting skill tendency (C and D) were “more satisfied” with the past than present which indicated parents’ inability to adapt their parenting practice in the early stages of adolescence (see Table 8).

Table 8: Comparison on activities for early adolescent development facilitation in each family type.

Child’s Satisfaction	Family Types			
	A	B	C	D
More before early adolescent stage	-	2	3	4
Equal at both stages	4	3	2	1
More during early adolescent stage	1	-	-	-

- Notes:**
1. A is families with high parenting skill tendency and high economic status
B is families with high parenting skill tendency and low economic status
C is families with low parenting skill tendency and high economic status
D is families with low parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 2. Data in the table are the numbers of couples in each family type.

In the couples’ opinions, parents of early adolescents should have sufficient time to care for the children closely, spend time talking with children to get to know them, instruct or caution them without verbal and physical violence, and help them to realize their thoughts and actions. Most couples said parenting practice within their families was satisfactory. But when comparing the couples’ opinion with that of their own child’s (see Table 9), a similarity of opinion in the satisfactory direction was found only in the families with high parenting skill tendency, while the families with low parenting skill tendency showed similar or different opinions only in the unsatisfactory direction. Among the sample group couples, only parents who were dissatisfied with parenting practice in their family tried to rectify the situation. No couple sought outside assistance because they did not consider what happened serious.

Table 9: Comparison of parents' and children's opinions on parenting practice in each family type.

Comparison of Parents' and Children's Opinions	Family Type			
	A	B	C	D
Satisfactory/ satisfactory	4	5	-	-
Satisfactory/ unsatisfactory	-	-	2	4
Unsatisfactory/ unsatisfactory	-	-	3	1
Unsatisfactory/ satisfactory	1	-	-	-

- Notes:**
1. A is families with high parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 B is families with high parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 C is families with low parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 D is families with low parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 2. Data in the table are the numbers of couples in each family type.

For the sample group couples, significant problems impacting their parenting practice were: financial problems, which decreased the parents' ability to satisfy the child's needs; career problems, which decreased the parents' free time to spend with the child; a negative relationship between parents, which created obstacles for joint parenting among them; and negative relationships between parents and child, which led to conflicts, misunderstanding, or various kinds of violence among them. When comparing the significance of each problem, which affects parenting practice in each family type, it was found that the financial and career problems generally occurred regardless of family type. As for problems in relationships, all of them appeared only in the families with low parenting skill tendency, regardless of the family's economic status. (see Table 10).

Table 10: Comparison of problems affecting parenting practice in each family type.

Problems	Family Types			
	A	B	C	D
Financial	3	4	2	4
Career	3	3	4	2
Relationship between the couple	-	-	2	-
Relationship between parents and child	-	-	3	3

- Notes:**
1. A is families with high parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 B is families with high parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 C is families with low parenting skill tendency and high economic status
 D is families with low parenting skill tendency and low economic status
 2. Data in the table are the numbers of couples in each family type.

In problem-solving, methods each couple used were different due to the kinds of family resources available. From the research, family resources necessary for problem-solving include economic status of the family; social support, especially the assistance of the spouse; and a positive relationship among family members. An inter-relationship was found between the latter two factors.

4. Definitions of parenting skills and related factors

From the findings, it could be said that parenting is an evolving process which starts from discussions between the couple. It is a thinking process for them to achieve suitable guidelines for specific situations in their family. Parenting practice of the couple proceeds along the agreed upon guideline, which was different in each family. The couple's perception on the outcomes, both positive and negative, led them to their own parenting practice evaluation. If some deficiency was found, many intended to rectify it. In this case, parenting guidelines would be readjusted for better outcomes. Parenting practice of the couples with high parenting skill tendency was more complete (see Table 7), more suitable for specific situations in their families (see Table 8), and more satisfactory to both parents and children in contrast to parenting

practice of the couples with low parenting skill tendency (see Table 9). Therefore, the definition of parenting skill based on this finding is “an ability of parents to enhance child’s development and satisfy child’s demands completely and suitably for specific situations in their family”. This definition, slightly different than the one that appears in the conceptual framework, is due to an important change of context and recognition of its impact on parenting practice.

The findings showed three factors, family stress, family resources and joint learning between parents, were related to parenting skills. The relationship between each of them and parenting skills were as follows:

1) Relationship between “joint learning between parents” and parenting skills

Joint learning between parents was a concept found from the research and proposed to replace “inter-parental agreement” due to its capability in explaining the entire process of parenting practice. In the conceptual framework, “inter-parental agreement” referred to the process by which father and mother combined their own parenting-related knowledge until suitable guidelines for joint parenting between them were obtained. Therefore, it could be said that “discussion between parents”, found in this research, was similar to “inter-parental agreement”. Due to the findings indicating that joint parenting was not only restricted to “discussion between parents”, but also practice in accordance with the agreed upon guidelines, perception and evaluation of practice outcomes, and readjustment for more suitable guidelines, which would lead to better outcomes, all of these should be included in the process of parenting practice. A connection between each step could be considered as a learning process in which related knowledge was gained from actual practice. As a result, the parenting skill of the couple would increase in accordance with the increased learning between them. Therefore, “joint learning between parents” might be a more suitable concept than “inter-parental agreement” as a major factor related to the parenting skill of the couple.

One aspect of “joint learning between parents” was the couple’s ability to adapt to different family situations and decide on suitable guidelines accordingly.

Since most couples with high parenting skill tendency were able to make their parenting practice satisfactory for children at all times (see Table 8), which differed from the couples with low parenting skill tendency, it could be said that “joint learning between parents” had a positive relationship with parenting skill in each family.

2) *Relationship between “family stress” and parenting skills*

In the conceptual framework, “family stress” referred to a negative atmosphere within the family which occurred when facing some problems. Families with a large number of problems had more stress. Stress at a high level created a restrictive condition where the parents hardly applied suitable guidelines for effective practice. This weakened the parenting skill of these couples.

From the findings, stress in the sample group couple’s family resulted mostly from stressful events, especially problems about the finances and careers of the couple, and intra-family tension rooted from a negative relationship between the couple or between the parents and child. Because the family with low parenting skill tendency had more problems and stress than the family with high parenting skill tendency, it could be said that “family stress” had a negative relationship to parenting skill.

3) *Relationship between “family resources” and parenting skills*

In the conceptual framework, “family resources” refers to properties, assistance, or qualifications which the family possessed and could be used as needed. Family resources were related to parenting skill, both directly and indirectly. The direct relationship was an ability of the couple to use the resources for parenting practice improvement, while the indirect relationship was an ability of the couple to use them for problem-solving until the family stress was reduced or gone.

The findings showed families found important resources to be having high economic status, sufficient social support in times of need, and a positive relationship among family members, especially the relationship between the couple and the relationship between parents and child.

As for the economic status of the family, the findings indicated that the family with high economic status had less financial problems, and were able to cope with financial problems more effectively than the family with low economic status. In

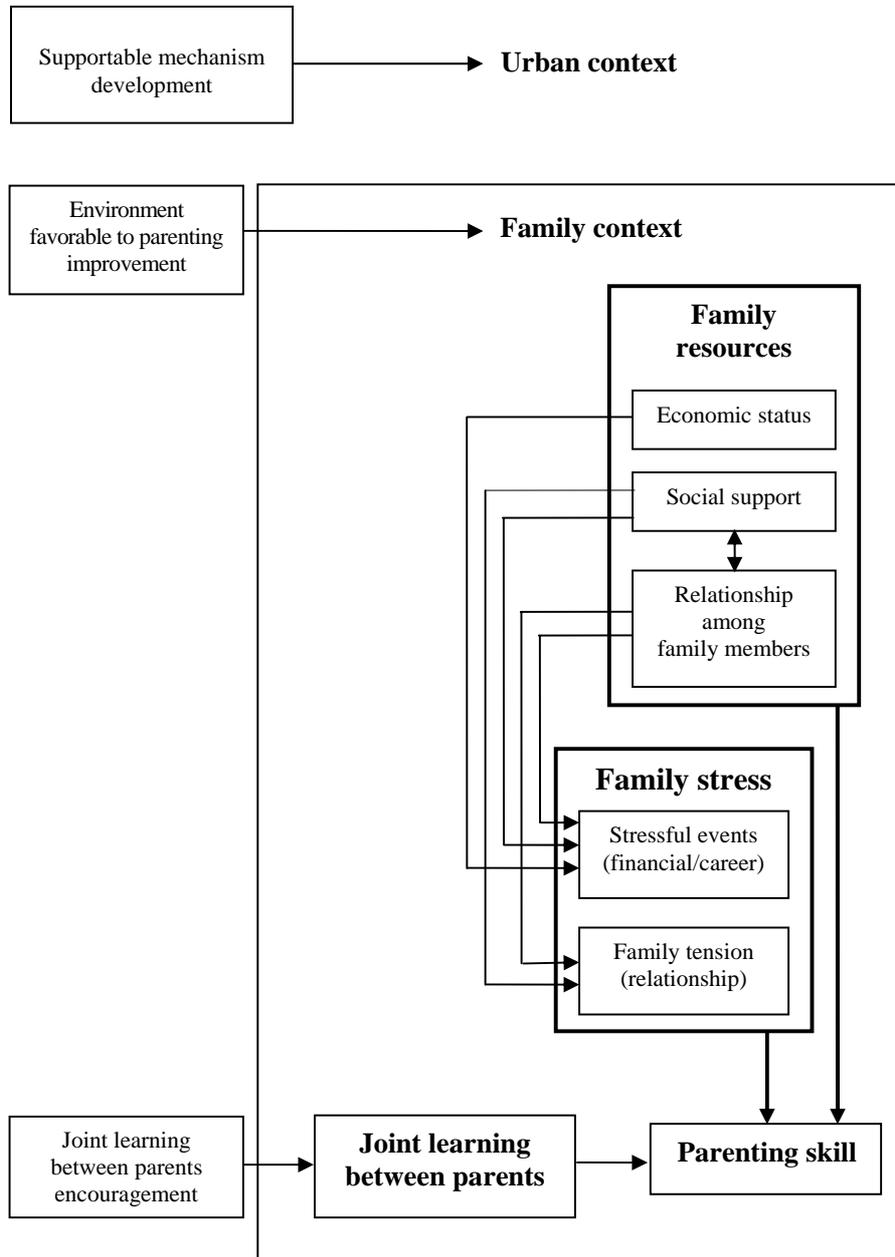
the meantime, less restrictive conditions in financial aspects of the family resulted in the couple's ability to completely facilitate child development and fulfill child demands as compared to the family with low economic status.

It was also found that there is an inter-relationship between social support and positive relationships between family members. This means that a result of positive relationships was family members' affection and cohesiveness as well as their readiness to help each other with any problem encountered. When members tried every way to help each other, it would increase their affection and cohesiveness, as well as attempts to maintain the family by making the family's welfare the first priority. In such a family, not only did problems related to relationship among family members have less opportunity to occur, but stress from other kinds of problems were also lessened due to each member realizing that people in the same family were ready to help him or her at anytime. Helping each other included parenting practices such as duties replacement, responsibility sharing, or economization for financial problem-solving, etc. This act increased the couple's ability in parenting practice, even given restrictive conditions in their family.

Because high economic status could decrease stress and increase parenting practice efficiency only in financial aspects, while social support and positive relationships between family members could decrease stress and increase parenting practice efficiency in all aspects, the latter had more significance to parenting skill. It was obviously seen that some families with lower economic status had parenting skill in the high level, and all families with high parenting skill tendency had no problems in relationships among family members (see Table 10). Consequently, it could be said that the families with all kinds of resources were the most favorable for parenting practice and that the families with higher economic status and high parenting skill tendency was the group in which parenting practice was most complete and satisfactory in both children's and parents' opinion (see Table 7 and Table 9).

The relationship between factors found from the research which enables these conclusions to be drawn is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Factors related to early adolescent parenting skill in Bangkok



Discussion

From the findings, it could be said that there are many kinds of support which exist and enable the families to function in the changing context of a highly urbanized area. It was found that 75 per cent of all families were intact families where early adolescents resided with and were fostered by their own parents. One quarter of these intact families were in an extended pattern where relatives shared responsibilities, reducing the impact of time shortage – a critical problem of parents at the present. It was also found that 85 per cent of early adolescents in the research area had an opportunity to meet their parents or other adults in the same residence immediately after school finished (parents picked children up) or when arriving home, which meant they were looked after by adults nearly all the time. The adult the early adolescents mostly met was not only their mothers but also their grandparents. As for the latter, this meant some adolescents still had the benefit of experiences taught by the aged as well as learning how to take care of elders, which is a traditional Thai value.

Although the urban mothers had to work to earn money, most of them, either in nuclear or extended families, had to take care of their children at the same time. In the meantime, the fathers seemed to be assistants who gave a hand only when the mothers needed it rather than sharing in some tasks and taking responsibility directly. In most families, although the proportion of activities without practice was slight, some of them, such as explanations about physical changes at the adolescent age, counseling when having conflict with family members, looking after the child's association with friends, spending time together, or encouraging the child to participate in clubs or groups, could count as necessities which were not attended to. This meant that not only were the adolescent's demands unmet, but it also led to problems such as being curious or anxious, trying to find answers to reduce anxiety by themselves, or seeking protection or counseling from outsiders, especially peers. In this situation, the parents also lacked the opportunity to stay close to the children, to notice their physical changes, to perceive their thoughts and needs, and to learn to adjust themselves suitably for changed situations. Although some parental responsibilities could be replaced by teachers and the learning process at school, in the seductive modern society, which can

easily contaminate children, leaving all parental responsibility to the school can cause unexpected problems.

From the results, parenting could be explained as a dynamic process which continuously changed according to the changed situation in the family. Therefore, parenting practice in each family is different due to restrictive conditions which exist. There are family characteristics of the nuclear or extended pattern, kinds and quantity of family members, relationships among them, economic status, or career pattern, etc., which determine the specific context of each family. In this case, it could be said that remission of unimportant activities in parents' minds or allowing children to self-supervise for parental burden relief might be the methods chosen by parents who are unable to fulfill their parental duties due to restrictive conditions in their families. In addition, the situation in which the mother takes all parental responsibility while the "functional absent" father works for a living alone might be considered a division of labor which is appropriate for their family at the time.

It was found that an "understanding" was a significant foundation for early adolescent parenting practice. Smoothly practicing to facilitate child development or satisfy child demands resulted from an understanding between parents and child, while the effective practice at all steps of joint parenting resulted from an understanding between the parents themselves. It could be said that the great impact of living in an urban center, such as in the research area, was time scarcity, which led family members to be estranged and misunderstood. In addition to ineffective communication, misunderstanding among family members would be extended and relationships among them would be made worse – turning the situation into a serious problem. It could be said that happy married life and coherence between the couple were important to joint parenting. These factors ensure effective communication within the family and an attempt by each parent to continue being responsible, to share in the happiness and sorrow, to help with problems, and to maintain their family life even if their own pleasure had to be reduced. Although having high economic status could reduce financial problems, it could not reduce problems in the relationship. In the meantime, good relationships among family members led to attachment and a sense of family in

regard to readiness to help each other with problem-solving. Moreover, having both high economic status and good relationships among family members is a perfect situation, where the family is strengthened for parental responsibility fulfillment.

Recommendations

Because the pressures of urbanism affect family life, and restrictive conditions in the family affect joint parenting between the couple, methods for parenting improvement should concentrate on joint parenting encouragement, an environment favorable to parenting practice promotion, and the development of social mechanisms to support parents in the Bangkok context. Examples of methods which could assist parents in Bangkok to fulfill their responsibility are as follows:

1. Providing information to increase knowledge related to parenting practice as well as the responsibility of each member for a healthy family life
2. Enhancing relationships within the family by providing occasions on which all members can spend time together.
3. Promoting new values favorable for joint parenting between parents such as inter-changing the power in relationships, husband-wife and parents-child, towards an equilibrium; adjusting gender roles in the direction of complementing and fulfilling each other to create happiness and well-being for the whole family.
4. Developing support mechanisms for parents to fulfill their duties under restrictive conditions of Bangkok life such as well-managed safe and convenient mass transportation, developing a secure and temptation-free environment for both children and adults.
5. Preparing adolescents and young adults for family life by counseling them to start family life with love, start parenthood with mental and economical readiness, and use learning as a vital instrument for family life proceedings.

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