

Participatory Action Research to Develop a Programme for Enhancing the Self-efficacy Beliefs of Parents of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on the development of a programme by means of participatory action research to enhance the self-efficacy beliefs of parents of adolescents. Self-efficacy theory was used as conceptual framework. During the first cycle of the project, a draft programme was developed. During the second cycle of the project the programme was further developed with 21 parents over a period of six weeks. Three groups were formed according to family structure. This paper reports on an evaluation of the programme during the second cycle of the project. Data was collected by means of continuous parental feedback and observation during six sessions, and from focus groups after programme implementation. The research identified programme content and presentation style that seemed to enhance parental self-efficacy. The study is significant for illustrating how participatory action research and a consideration of relevant learning theories can be used to develop programmes of this nature.

INTRODUCTION

Jerman and Constantine (2010) pointed out the huge responsibility of parents to guide their children as they move into adolescence. Other authors have also emphasised the pivotal role that parents play to facilitate successful psycho-social adaptation by adolescents if the parents provide them with adaptive, engaging, and nurturing environments (Steca et al. 2011).

However, certain societal trends make parenting particularly demanding. One of these trends is the current high divorce rate. For example, in South Africa, one out of every two marriages ends in divorce (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa [FAMSA] 2007). According to some researchers children from divorced families tend to show poorer adjustment than children from intact families (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan 2002; Emery 2004; Martin et al. 2004). Researchers have also pointed out the numerous challenges that single-parenting poses (Townsend 2006; Fox 2007). Mostly due to divorce, remarriages are on the rise with their own unique challenges for parenting (Pasley and Moorefield 2004; LeBey 2005; Santrock 2006).

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The relationships between parents and their children are also influenced by the development phases of the children. The period of adolescence may be particularly difficult for some parents (Atkinson 2006). Common challenges for parents include adolescent communication problems (Schwandt and Underwood 2013); emotional problems (Dilley and Clitheroe 2002; Saritas et al. 2013) and mood swings (Bariola et al. 2011); sexual risk behavior (Adejumo 2012; Parkes et al. 2013); poor academic achievement (Lee 2012); experimentation with alcohol and illegal substances (Dilley and Clitheroe 2002; Dahl 2004; Carr-Gregg 2005; Caldwell et al. 2007; Adejumo 2011; Griffin et al. 2011), and negative peer influence (Vargas 2011). Parenting adolescents is therefore often thought to be one of the most challenging stages of parenting (Jones et al. 2000; Cockcroft 2002).

According to Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2004) and Santrock (2006), the styles parents use when interacting with their adolescent children also constitute an important dimension of parenting. Four main parenting styles have been identified which include *authoritarian* parents (controlling, autocratic, and with little love and understanding); *permissive* parents (lax in discipline, with little attention paid to training children for independence, but loving and involved); *authoritative* parents (loving and encouraging of the adolescents' pursuit of independence, yet also with control exercised and with expectations of mature behavior from their adolescents); and

neglectful parents (uninvolved in their children's lives) (Cowan 2004; Emery 2004; Carr-Gregg 2005; Santrock 2006). However, parents are generally ill equipped to identify their own style of parenting and lack knowledge of the possible effect of this style on adolescents. Hence, the need for training as indicated by several authors (for example, Gordon 2000; Speedie and Bauling 2002; Smith 2003; Townsend 2006; Schwandt and Underwood 2013).

Training parents may lead to enhanced parental self-efficacy (PSE). Bandura (1990:316) defined self-efficacy as people's "beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over task demands." Accordingly, PSE has been defined as the beliefs of parents in their capacity to influence their children's behavior and the environment in ways that can foster the children's successful development (Ardelt and Eccels 2001). To enhance PSE beliefs, parents need discernment regarding actions that have the potential to lead to desired outcomes, and the confidence in their ability to engage in such behaviors. Research has indicated that PSE plays a key role in promoting children's successful adjustment to life (Coleman and Karraker 2005; Steca et al. 2011). The aim of this research was therefore to develop a programme to enhance PSE. Although parent support programmes have been developed over the years, there is a dearth of research on the *process* of developing a programme which would be sensitive to the needs of parents within a specific geographical/cultural entity. The importance of such relevancy has been indicated by Zimmerman (1995) when he pointed out the context-specific nature of self-efficacy judgments.

Objectives of the Study

In the light of the above, the objectives of the study were to investigate the self-efficacy theory (SET) and thereafter to develop and test a programme to enhance self-efficacy beliefs of parents of adolescents through cycles of participatory action research. The SET is explained in the next section.

Conceptual Framework: the SET

The SET is an aspect of social cognitive theory which "is an approach to understanding human

cognition, action, motivation, and emotion that assumes that people are capable of self-reflection and self-regulation and that they are active shapers of their environments rather than simply passive reactors to them" (Maddux 1995:4). Social cognitive theory presupposes that most behavior is goal-directed and that people learn through the observation of the consequences of their own and others' behavior (Bandura 1986). Behavior, environmental occurrences and inner factors (such as cognition, emotion, and biological events) are reciprocal influences that interact continuously. SET is mainly concerned with the role of social cognitive factors in this triadic model.

According to Bandura (in Maddux 1995), there are four primary sources of self-efficacy beliefs. Of these, performance experiences are the most significant — clear success or failure in parents' interaction with their children, is the most powerful source of self-efficacy. Secondly, observation of other parental practices and noting the consequences of their behavior also influence the observers' expectancies. Thirdly, positive or negative feedback from others (such as from adolescent children), is another source of self-efficacy. Finally, emotional arousal such as stress or anger, and their related physical states, can also influence self-efficacy when parents associate aversive physiological arousal with their own poor behavioral performance. To the above-mentioned influences on PSE, Coleman and Karraker (2005) add the parents' own early experiences in their families of origin; vicarious experiences during the childhood years; parents' evaluation of the extent to which they adhere to the values and norms in their own families; parental experiences of other children in addition to their own; and finally, the parents' degree of cognitive/behavioral preparation for parenting. Feinberg (2002) also points out the significant role of a marital partner's support to develop PSE. Finally, self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by culture (Oettingen 1995).

Efficacious parents tend to have positive mental health and seem to enjoy a sense of personal empowerment in parenting that helps them manage their parental duties well (Coleman and Karraker 2005). These parents are committed to parenting; they attempt to educate themselves about child-rearing; they have well-developed, problem-focused coping skills; their caretaking is warm, responsive and non-punitive; they are

able to promote positive experiences for their children despite adversity in their environments; they set high and specific performance goals and persist when problems arise (Schunk 1995). Maddux (1995:4) confirms that the crux of SET is that “the initiation of and persistence at behaviors and courses of action are determined primarily by judgments and expectations concerning behavioral skills and capabilities and the likelihood of being able to successfully cope with environmental demands and challenges”.

In the light of the above exposition, the main aim of this research was to use participatory action research to develop the self-efficacy beliefs of a selected group of South African parents of adolescents. The remainder of the article reports on the research methods, the results and the conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

Action research is systematic inquiry and critical reflection by practitioners to improve their daily practice (McMillan and Schumacher 2010). *Participatory* action research, according to Babbie (2007), is a research paradigm in which the researcher’s function is to operate as a resource to others to empower them to act successfully to their own advantage.

The First Action Research Cycle

During the first cycle of the project, a draft programme was developed inductively with a small sample group of volunteer parents within the context of an educational psychology practice of the one author of this article. Interviews were used to collect data. This was followed by an extensive literature review which led to the preliminary design of a programme which was implemented during the second cycle of the project.

The programme was developed for a six week period focusing on the following: (i) Understanding the parent and the adolescent (including physical changes in adolescents and their parents, generational factors); (ii) What is expected of parents of adolescents (emotional needs of adolescents, parenting styles and their effect, developing effective parenting styles, the role of parents in adolescents’ lives); (iii) Communication (common adolescent communication patterns, how to communicate effectively *when the*

adolescent has the problem); (iv) Communication (common parent communication patterns; how parents can communicate *when they have a problem with the adolescent*); (v) Conflict, discipline and power struggles (how to communicate *when the parent and the child have relationship problems*; effective ways of coping, integrating parenting skills and maintaining consistency and flexibility); (vi) Parenting in the new millennium (coping with challenges, parenting in ways that encourage adolescents to be ‘other-centered’, focusing on challenges specific to the different family structures, helping adolescents overcome divorce effects and fostering co-parenting relationships).

The Second Action Research Cycle

During the second cycle, the above-mentioned programme was implemented with a group of 21 parents (five male, 16 female) of adolescents, living in the Southern Cape of South Africa. The facilitator of the programme (the one author of this article), and the parents were all from the same cultural group. The parents responded to an invitation at the two largest English medium secondary schools in one town. Three groups were formed according to family structure as follows: (i) eight parents (six females and two males) who were part of a nuclear family (a mother, father and their own offspring); (ii) six parents (five females and one male) who were part of a single-parent family; (iii) seven parents (five females and two males) who were part of a blended-extended family (one parent was not the biological parent of at least one child).

The programme was implemented with the 21 parents in one group, once per week, over a period of six weeks. Each session lasted at least two hours. During the sessions the parents were at times divided into three groups according to family structure, for discussions. Participants were also given notes which included homework tasks. To evaluate the programme continuously, data was collected qualitatively. At the beginning of the sessions groups were given the opportunity to appraise the previous session. These appraisals were recorded, transcribed and reflected on. The information was then used to improve future sessions. Thus, a participatory action research approach was used constantly to develop the programme. Field notes were also taken throughout the study. Final focus groups were

held shortly after the completion of the six-week programme and were tape recorded for transcription and analysis.

For data analysis, a bottom-up strategy was adopted as follows (Johnson and Christensen 2000): segmenting (dividing the data into meaningful units by reading the transcribed data and identifying units of text that were important for the research), coding by means of category names and symbols, compiling a master list, giving face-sheet codes to groups and checking for inter-coder reliability between the authors of this article.

To guarantee the value of the project the authors ensured that sampling and procedures did not distort the findings; that multiple methods were used to collect data (for example, interviews and focus groups which were tape recorded and transcribed, as well as field notes); that actions followed logically from findings; and that the findings resulted in improved practice (McMillan and Schumacher 2010). All ethical measures were adhered to such as obtaining informed consent at all levels and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

The results are presented next. They revealed an increase in the parents' knowledge and competencies that changed their behavior towards the adolescents. This resulted in positive experiences that reportedly increased the parents' confidence in their own abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The parents attested to the fact that within the supportive environment of the programme implementation, they obtained insights which they applied with their adolescent children with positive results. If behaviors were not immediately effective they were motivated to persist. They did not only learn from their own experiences, but also from the feedback they received from the other parents during the six weeks. Thus, the programme facilitated the PSE of the participants.

The participants identified two main aspects of the programme as valuable to facilitate PSE: (i) The selected *programme content* (understanding life phases; generational theory and its effects; parenting styles and roles; parenting skills; family structure and parenting; and parenting in the 21st century). (ii) The *programme presentation* (a socio-constructivist approach with on-

going support; useful resources; an effective time structure; the inclusion of different parent groups and group work; and the amount of information included in each session). These two aspects are explained in the light of the conceptual framework. Quotes are presented by female (F) or male (M) parents from nuclear families (N), blended families (B) and single parent families (SP).

Programme Content to Enhance PSE

Parents found the following aspects of the programme content particularly helpful.

Understanding Life Phases

Programme content that the parents found particularly beneficial for their interaction with their children included information about physical development during adolescence as explained by several authors (Ezzo and Bucknam 2000; Hersh 2004). This helped the parents understand how hormones, sexual development and the like influenced emotions and behavior. They also appreciated learning about cognitive and moral development during adolescence, in consideration of the views of several authors (for example, Cockcroft 2002; Healy 2004; Santrock 2006). This assisted the parents to appreciate why adolescents thought and communicated the way they did. Understanding their adolescents' psychosocial development motivated the parents to purposefully support their children to form a clear personal and vocational identity and thus prevent role confusion or identity diffusion (Cowan 2004). Finally, insight into the challenges common to parents of adolescents (for example, risk-taking behavior, peer pressure, communication difficulties, dating, emotional problems), supported the parents to persevere in trying to cope with the challenges. For example, one participant (SPF) remarked:

We enjoyed the theory – it's good to get the facts and know it isn't just a generalisation that our teenagers are sleeping so much or are grumpy and emotional – there are actual medical, logical reasons behind their behavior.

The research also revealed that facilitating insight into the mid-life parental life phase in which most of the parents found themselves was beneficial. This knowledge made parents aware of their own developmental challenges, and of how these coincided with the challenges of ado-

lescence. This enabled them to better cope with conflict and empowered them to seek ways of overcoming 'normal' challenges of parenting adolescents.

Generational Theory and its Effects on Parenting

The parents were part of the Boomers (those born between 1950 and 1969) or Xers (those born between 1970 and 1989), as identified by Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2004). They found studying generational effects useful because this stimulated reflection on possible reasons why they and their adolescent children behaved in certain ways, and of how the way they had been parented affected the manner in which they acted as parents. This understanding helped them to change ineffective ways of parenting (such as repeating their own parents' mistakes). Instead, they could consciously choose parenting strategies which could foster intimate ties between family members. The parents became aware of behaviors associated with the generational effects typical of Boomers, such as busy schedules, high divorce rates, over-protectiveness, and lack of boundaries for their children, which could have caused them to parent less effectively (Codrington and Grant-Marshall 2004). For example, a parent (BF) stated:

Our group really enjoyed the generational aspects of parenting ... It's true - what often happens is that when you are a parent, you over-compensate for the stuff that you didn't get when you were a child - so the course stimulated things that I did not think could be stimulated which was nice. I became aware of why I parent the way I do and of what I need to change.

Parenting Styles and Roles

Through group discussions, the programme stimulated reflection on parenting styles and roles (for example, Santrock 2006). The parents reported that they were able to see the value of changing their parenting style or of modifying their approach with different offspring or in different situations. Participants reported that they understood the benefits of adopting an authoritative parenting style which provided adolescents with love and boundaries. This is in accordance with Schwandt and Underwood (2013) who reported that clear rules and consequences, as well

as adolescent supervision, protect adolescents from participating in high-risk behaviors.

PSE was particularly enhanced by insight into parenting roles that motivated parents to consciously adopt new roles with beneficial results. Clear role definitions and an awareness of how roles change enabled the parents to formulate a kind of 'job description'. By keeping in mind that their main parenting goal was to guide adolescents in such a way that they become successful adults in all aspects of their lives, they were supported to avoid short-sightedness in their parenting role. They were assisted striving to meet the emotional needs of their adolescent children which led to more rewarding relationships between them. The importance of this has been indicated (Schwandt and Underwood 2013). One parent (NF) stated,

You have to have all that information on the teenager. You have to understand where they are coming from. We are not psychologists so we don't know the theory behind what and why they are doing...it helps us, as the programme is presented, to understand - so that's the reason why we have the four pillars [nurture, structure, challenge, engagement] and so on. You forget what it was like to be a teenager!

Such insight as referred to above, was facilitated by parents' active consideration of the needs of adolescents, namely nurture, structure, engagement, and challenge (Jernberg and Booth 1999) — also called the four pillars of therapy. (i) Regarding the need for *nurture*, adolescent children needed to know that they had unconditional love and acceptance from their parents through words of affirmation and encouragement; quality time spent with the adolescent; and physical closeness or touch. (ii) Smith (2003) indicated that the need for security was a basic need and this pillar was referred to as *structure*. Parents concluded that they had to meet this need by providing structure through clear expectations and rules. The adolescents also needed to know that their parents could be trusted. Thus, the parents needed to be consistent and take control in the home. (iii) In order to promote *engagement*, the parents were required to provide motivation and stimulation in their interaction with their offspring, and have fun with them. (iv) The *challenge* pillar implied that the parents had to encourage their adolescents to accept challenges, and to have confidence in their ability to achieve success. At the same time the parents needed to

strive to develop ways of meeting their own parental needs and maintain positive marital and co-parenting relationships.

Parenting Skills

Parents often struggled to communicate about certain issues, in particular about sexual matters (Jerman and Constantine 2010), rendering adolescents vulnerable to risky sexual behavior (Schwandt and Underwood 2013). Barriers to communicating about sexual matters include lack of time, embarrassment, and fears that such communication may stimulate the adolescents' interest in sex (Fehringer et al. 2012). Thus, this programme aimed to facilitate effective communication skills which the parents could use with their adolescents. The skills included active listening and reflecting, the effective use of "I" and "you" messages and ways of avoiding the common parental roadblocks to communication, such as 'solution messages' and 'put down messages'.

The parents also attested to the fact that they had become more flexible in their communication with different children. One mother (NF) stated:

What works with one child doesn't work with the other child. I had a situation with the "I message" with the youngest one ... he's turning ten. I sat him down and I said, "I feel... when you ..." and he looked at me intently and I thought I'm really getting through to him and he said, "Mom, can I have some ice cream?" It went right over his head! "I messages" work with my other two boys but he was too young.

The parents referred to practical skills that they had acquired. With regard to discipline, managing conflict and problem solving, the programme raised parents' awareness to systematically 'let go' and hand over responsibilities to the adolescent; determine who had the problem and to then act accordingly; implement a 'win-win' approach to problem solving; and to establish when they needed to seek outside assistance and when to implement choices and consequences rather than rewards and punishment. This confirmed the statement by Shapiro et al. (2013) that when parents' knowledge of adolescent development was increased, they *punished* less and used more effective ways of improving their children's behavior. Griffin et al. (2011) also indicated that parenting practices characterised by monitoring, consistent limit setting and nur-

turing communication patterns improved adolescent behavior.

Family Structure and Parenting

Discussions on the influence of family structure on parenting roles (Townsend 2006) were essential since single-parent and blended families created numerous challenges. Disciplining and maintaining boundaries were particularly difficult in blended families because of all the different role players involved. One parent (BF) observed that the course recognised the influences at work in blended families with regard to different rules the families had. "To try and blend all that and still stay sane is quite a big thing for us". Single parents also had particular difficulties because of the limited time, resources and talents that were involved. Often parents outside the home in which the child was living wanted to dictate the parenting and the rules which were set.

Parenting in the 21st Century

Parents valued information on 21st century parenting challenges, including the influence of electronic media, safety concerns, working parents, materialism and sexual issues (for example, Cowan 2004; Townsend 2006). They valued this information because they felt ill equipped for many of these challenges as they had not experienced many of them when they were growing up. They also felt disempowered by the fact that their adolescents were often more knowledgeable about modern issues, especially related to electronic media. The parents realised that adolescents were challenged at an increasingly earlier age and that parents who were knowledgeable would be able to parent more effectively. The parents became aware that they could be making choices which were 'creating' dependent, inconsiderate, unappreciative adolescents, or alternatively adolescents who were being 'neglected' in some way. The parents also understood how changing their parenting could help them avoid the results of ineffective parenting.

In the light of the above, it can be concluded that within the cultural group that participated in this study, the above topics were seen as relevant and should be included in subsequent programs for similar groups.

The Presentation of a Programme to Enhance PSE

While programme content was important, presentation style was pivotal. Ideas on effective programme presentation that emerged from the research are now discussed.

A Socio-constructivist Approach with On-going Support

The psycho-educational programme was effective because it supported the parents to co-construct their knowledge and co-design their learning in a collaborative environment (Roux 2007; Henze 2009). This approach led the parents through an interactive process involving three aspects: (i) *awareness*, whereby they were given information to promote understanding of parent efficacy; (ii) *exploration*, whereby they were given opportunities for active participation and practical application of programme content; and (iii) *personalisation*, whereby they were given opportunities to personalise exploration by assessing and understanding their own parenting experiences, evaluating their parenting values, identifying and adjusting parenting goals and developing the action plans to meet these goals.

The research showed how providing multiple opportunities for practical application and the use of real-life scenarios helped programme participants to gain more effective parenting skills than before. This improved their relationships with their children which enhanced their PSE. The opportunities included group work (discussions and role play), homework exercises, real-life anecdotes and case studies, journaling, question and answer sessions, feedback sessions and parent preparation work (before sessions). Regarding the homework exercises, one parent (BF) stated:

The homework helped us all open up as a family. For the kids, us coming home and saying, 'We've got homework', took the pressure off them and they kind of opened up quite easily. They really enjoyed the rating scales. The response from them has been so positive! We as parents enjoyed the discussions; we ended up having fun with our kids.

It was also shown that adapting the programme to meet the particular needs of the group increased the effectiveness of the programme. To this end, each participant was asked to indicate

their expectations of the programme at the beginning of the first session. In addition to this, feedback sessions were held at the beginning of each subsequent session. Participants could suggest changes to partially planned, upcoming sessions. These were then used to adapt subsequent sessions. The research also revealed that participants experienced the need for additional, on-going parental education and support.

Resources

Presenting sessions with the aid of PowerPoint presentations which were colorful, animated and informative, served to facilitate participant interest, concentration and ability to reflect. The PowerPoint presentations needed to be of an optimal length with an optimal amount of information on each slide. Participant feedback in this regard was important.

The programme included course notes and reading lists to facilitate the construction of knowledge and insight about relevant issues. This enabled participants to build on what they have learned. It assisted them to explore areas which were personally challenging.

Time Structure of the Programme

Dividing the programme into a number of sessions to be held at regular time intervals (once per week), was useful because this gave participants the opportunity to apply what they had learned. On returning to the next session, they had the opportunity to discuss application difficulties and to have skills reinforced. One parent (NF) declared:

You have to do this course over a number of weeks. Every sentence is a concept that you have to take and digest. You can't just read it, you have to implement it and see how it works in your family – so you need time in between sessions for you to implement things correctly.

The Inclusion of Different Parent Groups and Group Work

Having parents from different family structures on the same programme, arranging for them to work within these groups for parts of each session, and having feedback from groups in each session was in line with a socio-constructivist approach to learning (Roux 2007; Henze 2009).

The approach fostered PSE because it served to help parents realise the universality of problems and that their problems were sometimes minor in comparison to those of other parents. It gave them an opportunity to learn from other parents in similar and different family types, and to focus on issues related to their particular family type. The approach also fostered inter-parent understanding and cooperation.

Amount of Information Included in Each Session

It was important to ensure that an optimum amount of content was covered in each session. The programme lost its efficacy if sessions had

too much information. This overwhelmed the participants as they found it difficult to reflect on too much material.

SUMMATIVE DISCUSSION

Figure 1 illustrates the interrelationships of the main factors relevant for this research. In line with the triadic model of reciprocal influences as previously explained (Maddux 1995), these factors refer to environmental occurrences, inner features of the parent, and parental behavior within a particular context.

As Figure 1 shows, during the development of the programme, all the factors interrelated in the particular cultural, community and family

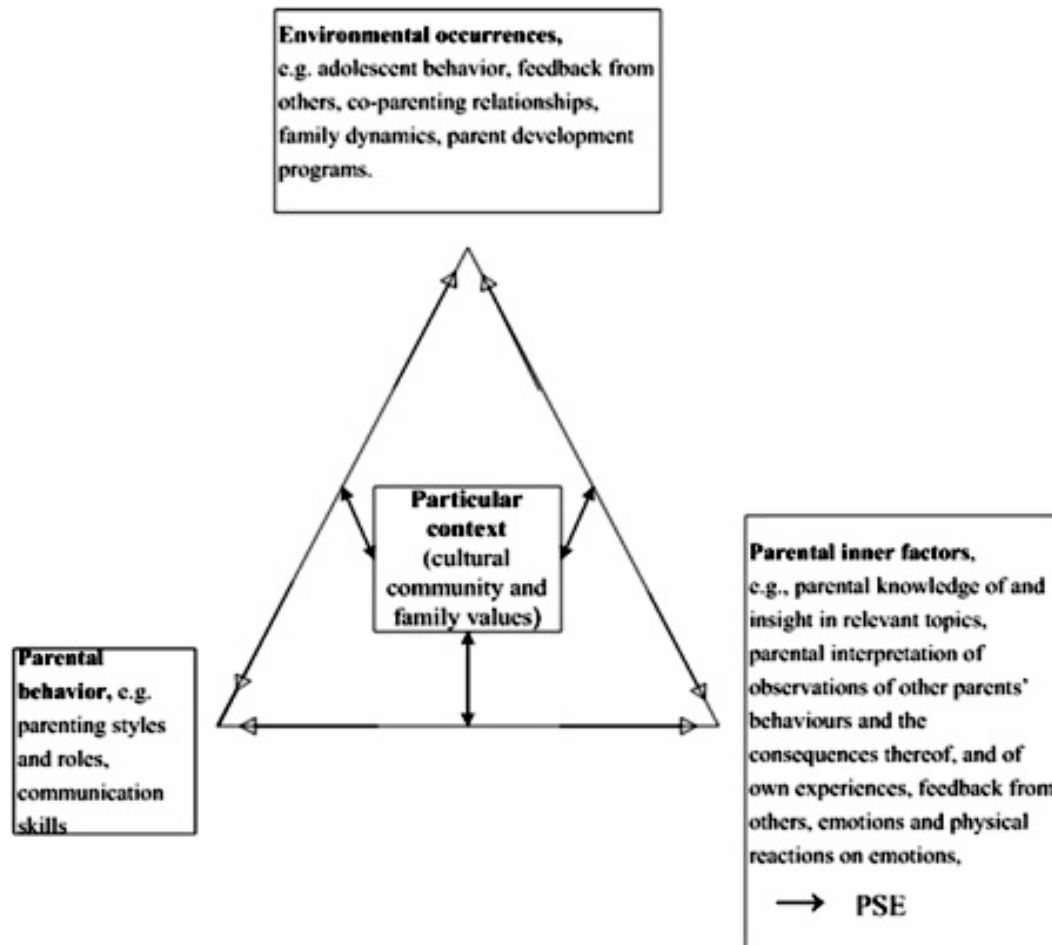


Fig. 1. The interrelationships of parental behavior, parental inner factors and environmental occurrences in a particular context

contexts. In these contexts certain values and norms operated with regard to what was acceptable for parenting and for adolescent behavior. The *environmental factors* at work that developed PSE and impacted on all the other factors, included adolescent behavior, feedback to the parent on their own behavior and that of their adolescent children, family dynamics (in nuclear, blended and single parent families), co-parenting relationships and the relevant parent development programme. The importance of taking cognizance of environmental factors has been also been pointed out by other researchers (Adejumo 2012; Parkes et al. 2013).

Parental behavior interacted with environmental occurrences and parental inner factors. Parental behavior, with particular reference to adolescent children, involved the parenting styles and roles that the parents adopted, as well as their communication skills. The significance of these roles and styles for adolescent development and behavior has also been indicated by other authors (Schwandt and Underwood 2013).

Parental inner factors included parental knowledge of and insight in relevant topics (which included the life phases of adolescence and midlife, effects of parental roles and styles, communication patterns and generational effects). Parental inner factors also involved parental interpretation of their observations of other parents' behaviors and the consequences thereof, and of their own experiences, as well as feedback from others (for example, from adolescent children and significant others). Social cognitive theory indicates that most behavior is goal-directed and parents learn through the observation of the consequences of their own and others' behavior (Bandura 1986). Emotions, and physical reactions to emotions such as stress or anger, also played a role (Maddux 1995). All of the before-mentioned factors impacted on PSE.

CONCLUSION

Parents with high PSE are empowered to support their adolescent children to adapt psychosocially and be successful at school. Hence the aim of this study was to develop a psycho-educational programme to enhance the self-efficacy beliefs of parents with adolescent children. The study is significant for illustrating how such a programme can be developed in any context by means of participatory action research.

The second cycle of the action research project to develop the programme was the focus of this article. It was conducted over a period of six weeks with 21 parents living in a town in the Southern Cape of South Africa. Thus, the project addressed the particular needs of a specific geographical entity that came together because of a common goal and a commitment to improvement. Based on the feedback of these parents, the article advances the argument that participatory action research, and a consideration of the SET and the principles of socio-constructivism (collaboration, context and the negotiation of thinking and learning), enabled the development of a 'customised' programme that reflected the voices of the participants. In this way relevant programme content and style of presentation could be identified. This approach motivated active parental participation and self-development while the parents also served as role models for one another. The programme targeted knowledge/insight, attitudes and behavior. This facilitated improved parental practices that elicited rewarding experiences which, according to the parents' comments, enhanced their PSE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was limited by the fact that the programme was implemented over a six week period only. Parental support should be ongoing by having regular 'refresher' courses for particular parent groups. After completion of a six week basic course, the parents could also arrange themselves in support groups that meet regularly and empower them in ways as they see fit. Schools could serve as centers to initiate the development of such programmes.

It is recommended that similar parenting programmes need to be developed for different cultures by means of participatory action research since self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by culture. Research is also needed on parental groups whose children are in life phases other than adolescence or who are dealing with specific parenting issues (such as drug-related problems). Such programmes support parents to guide the next generation to become well-adjusted, productive members of society.

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