

# Proposal on Service Design for Social Innovation: Self-expression of Adolescent to Parents

Jae Sun Yi<sup>(✉)</sup>

Department of Contents Convergence Design,  
Handong Global University, Pohang, South Korea  
creativel@handong.edu

**Abstract.** As a proposal to contributing to lessening of teenage suicide rate in South Korea, this study aimed to find a solution for conflict between teenage children and parents, the essential factor for juvenile delinquency, via an improved communication method between the two groups. Juvenile delinquency, still increasing despite new programs and systems conducted by governments and organizations, was approached in the perspective of family. Through surveys, it was shown parents' poor attitudes towards their children, such as demand for coercive submission, constant nagging and interrupting by directly cutting children off to speak over, were main obstacles to better communication. Thus this study proposes a communication service, preventing one-sided communication of parents' and providing space for adolescents to express their personal issues and problems, in which in response parents could only give positive feedback.

**Keywords:** Service design · Social innovation · Self-expression of adolescent to parents · Mobile application · Human-computer interaction

## 1 Introduction

Despite living in a world more affluent than ever, diverse social problems are caused by rapid social changes and changes in values. Hearing media reports on addictions, suicides, sexual trafficking and youth crimes, people are only getting more anxious about such issues as they are emerging as serious matter. Among them, juvenile delinquency is growing constantly, with more than 10,000 teenagers leaving home annually in South Korea [1], suffering on their own, leading to extreme measures such as suicide.

According to OECD Health Data 2014, South Korea was ranked the highest on the list of suicide rate with considerable rate of teenage suicide contributing to the statistic [2]. One in five adolescents in South Korea have felt suicide urge, and it was reported conflict with parents to be the main reason for the urge and drop in school grades as the second reason, which is another factor for parent-children conflict (see Figs. 1 and 2). According to a social service conducted by Statistics Korea done in 2014 [3], teenagers struggled the most with studying (52.6 %). In fact, it is the biggest reason for the

conflict between the parents and children. On the same note, Professor Jingon Jeong of the Department of Education, Hanyang Univeristy quoted; “Korean parents are only interested in their children’s academic performances, not in children’s wants” [4].

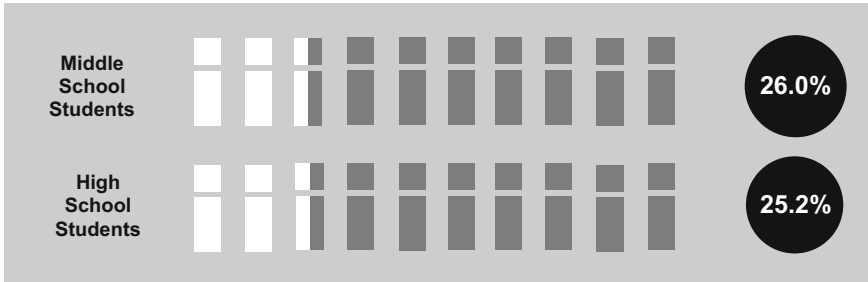


Fig. 1. Middle school and high school students’ suicide urge rate

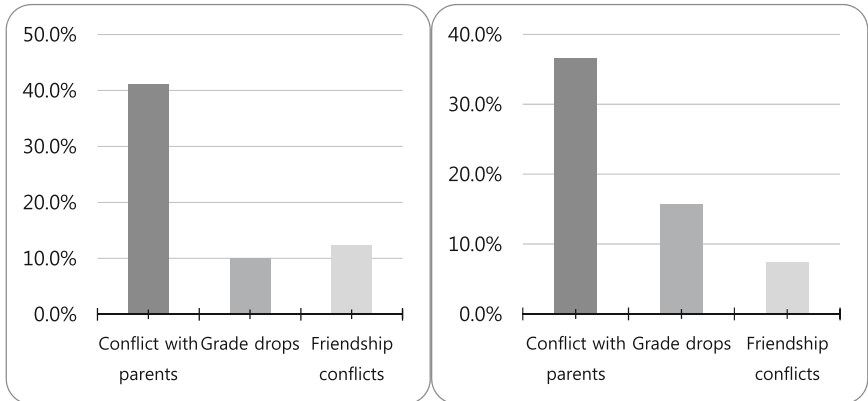


Fig. 2. Reasons for suicide urge

A major conflict factor lies on the difference between the way for communicating; parents, used to obedient relationship, demanding coercive submission from adolescents, whom self-expression is important. This caused absence of communication at home, leading many shapes of juvenile delinquency. Moreover, even though the rapid industrialization and urbanization in South Korea played firm scaffolds for stable education system and economic growth, interestingly with craze for education and the government’s policy of education, the parent’s pressure for better academic performance and success in life on teenagers made them unhappiest children in the world and worsened parent-children relationship [5]. The governments, only into numbers happening, funded programs and counselling that prevent adolescents from committing suicides, not being able to identify underlying cause for the happening. As a matter of fact, 7 out of 10 teenagers that committed suicide in Gyeonggi-do Province, had taken ‘wee class’, a counselling program, prior to the act [6]. Fragmentarily this shows how

the government’s confrontational policy does not help. Thus, with hypothesis that solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency is improving parent-child relationship, the smallest relationship unit in society, this study proposes a communication service design that able teenage children to express themselves to parents without any conflict.

## 2 Research Method

This study identified communication state of parent-children through stats, examined its validity by conducting surveys and interviews with parents and children; the target groups for service. As the age gap between the two users, parents and children, were big, children in middle school, aged from 13 to 15, and in high school, aged from 16 to 18, were set as main service users. For teenage children shows most frustration to lack of communication in the relationship, thus setting parents in 40s to 50s as second target group. Through data analysis, an optimum service platform was selected, followed by contents structure and flow.

## 3 Research on Present-Condition

Survey on Adolescent Condition in 2014 (Table 1) shows the amount of time spent between parents and teenage children in communication weekly. As shown, spending less than half an hour per week for communication is most popular, with less than an hour per week being the average. Table 2 also shows how often teenage children talk to parents about their issues and concerns. In statistics below, 34.6 % children never talk to parents about their concerns and 32.7 % answered once to thrice a month. The frequency of children speaking to parents about their concerns are ‘almost none’. As years go by fewer children are talking to their parents.

**Table 1.** Time spent on parent-children conversation per week

Time spent	Father	Mother
Never	0.0 %	2.0 %
Less than 30 min	48.1 %	22.4 %
Btw 30 min – 1 h	21.7 %	20.0 %
Btw 1 – 2 h	11.0 %	10.2 %
More than 2 h	12.0 %	23.0 %
None above	0.5 %	0.1 %

**Table 2.** Frequency of children sharing their concerns to parents

Frequency on conversation	2011	2014
Never	34.1 %	34.6 %
1 ~ 3 a month	35.8 %	32.7 %
1 ~ 3 a week	18.6 %	18.9 %
4 ~ 6 a week	4.1 %	5.0 %
Everyday	6.4 %	8.5 %
None above	1.0 %	0.3 %

Table 3 shows 89.6 % of the parents show satisfaction in their relationship with children. Not only that, 80.6 % of them think they are having ‘enough conversation with children’ and 71.0 % that they ‘respect children’s opinions’. Despite the short

**Table 3.** Parents’ satisfaction on relationship to teenage children

Questionnaire/answer	Not at all	Not so much	To some degrees	Always
Have enough conversation with children	1.1 %	19.3 %	59.3 %	20.3 %
Usually respect teenage children’s opinion	0.7 %	7.0 %	70.2 %	22.1 %
Satisfy with relationship with children	0.9 %	8.6 %	59.6 %	30.9 %

amount of time spent and decreasing frequency of conversation sessions between parents and teenage children, parents’ satisfaction on parent-children relationship is high.

The professional counselors indicate that students, who are going through puberty, regard parents, who are able to listen to them until they finish, as the most favorable ones. On the other hand, parents in South Korea believe that providing their children to make sure children do not fall behind when compared to other peers is the role they are assigned to do [7]. As such, not only do they have generation difference, but also they lack in understanding of each other. Table 4 below shows differences in list of concerns between parents and teenage children. As shown in the career category, both parents and children show concerns for finding out career, however shows the difference, in which children have vague anxiety over their future, while parents have concerns over children’s lack of preparation for their future. In addition to that, in the academic category, both parents and children feel burden on steady performance management and fear grade drops. Not only that, but they also show worries and big burdens on competition between friends in academic performances. Moreover, children feel pressure to get prepared for University enrollment, while parents think that the children have issues on not being able to do what they want to do due to studying. Children, in friendship category, show difficulty in adapting to communal living, concern over getting bullied and other similar notes. Meanwhile, parents show most concern over external issues, such as amount of time their children spend with the peers and the kids’ difference in physical development with other peers. Finally, in family category, teenage children show dissatisfaction over their siblings’ and parents’ attention on them and over parents’ constant emphasis on academic performances, while parents have conflicts regarding their children within themselves on top of conflicts with children. Like wise, parents and children show different range of conflict factors and concerns; what parents thought their children were going through were not always in accord with what the children actually going through.

From above research few insights were learned. (1) The amount of time spent on parent-children communication and the frequency of it are low and teenage children experience difficulty in expressing their concerns to their parents. (2) On the contrary, parents think they are having enough amount of conversations with children and think they show respect to their children, and are satisfied with the overall relationship with children. (3) Both children and parents have different concerns and factors that they regard as conflict starters.

**Table 4.** Categories of adolescence concerns recognized by teenage children and parents

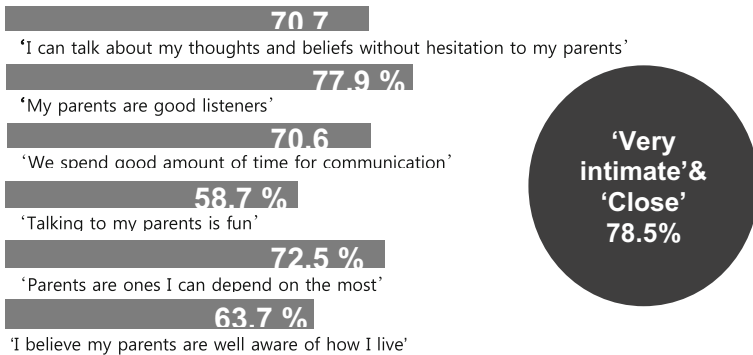
Category	Sub-category	Teenage children	Parents
Career	Experiencing difficulty in figuring out future career path	V	V
	Having vague anxiety about future career	V	
	Lacking preparation for decided career		V
	Struggling with role of parents and expenses in career exploration		V
Academic	Not studying (lack of academic interest)		V
	Feeling burden on steady performance management	V	V
	Having fear of low grades	V	V
	Discontent at not having free time		V
	Feeling burden on competition and comparison with peers	V	V
	Feeling pressure to get prepared for university enrollment	V	V
Friendship	Spending unnecessary amount of time with peers		V
	Experiencing difficulty in friendship		V
	Anxiety about different physical development than other peers		V
	Lacking friendship skills	V	
	Experiencing hardship on friendship due to grades	V	
	Feeling alienation from the crowd	V	
	Having heterosexual relationship issues	V	
Family	Having marital disputes, due to their children		V
	Relationship with parents		V
	Parent-children relationship growing apart	V	
	Feeling discontent with parents attitude on children	V	
	Lacking attention from parents	V	
	Dissatisfaction with emphasis academic performance	V	

## 4 Surveys and Results

A survey was conducted to teenagers aged from 13 to 18, from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> April in 2015. Online survey and printed survey were distributed to each school and handed in accordingly. In total 219 persons were involved in this survey, and 217 valid answers were selected and then carefully analyzed. Among the respondents, 114 were middle school students, making 52.1 % of the whole, and 103 were high school students, making 47.1 % of the whole. 80 male students, taking up 38.2 %, and 137 female students, taking up 62.8 %, were involved in this survey. The first survey investigated on the intimacy teenagers felt they had with their parents, whether there are conflicts

with parents, and on factors that hindered further conversation with parents. The second survey investigated to search for an effective method of communication between the parents and children.

From the first set of survey, about parent-children communication in the last one-year period, 70.7 % reported ‘I can talk about my thoughts and beliefs without hesitation to my parents’, 77.9 % ‘My parents are good listeners’, 70.6 % ‘We spend good amount of time for communication’, 72.5 % ‘Parents are ones I can depend on the most’, and 63.7 % reporting ‘I believe my parents are well aware of how I live’. On the scale from 1 to 10, 1 being ‘very intimate’ with parents and 10 being ‘very far’ from parents, 172 answered between ‘very intimate’ to ‘close’, taking up 78.5 % of the whole. (see Fig. 3) Teenagers, in overall, showed positive feedback concerning their relationship with parents and conversation satisfaction.



**Fig. 3.** Subjects conversed in last one year period and intimacy with parents and respondent

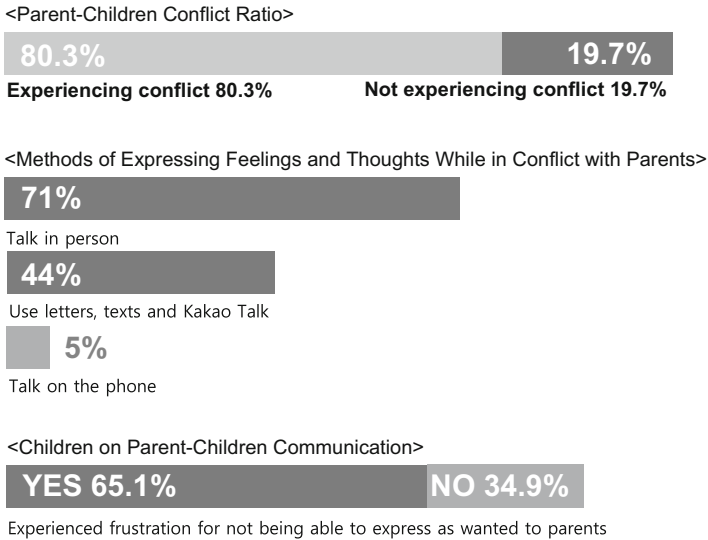
Regarding the frequency of parent-children communication, it is shown that children on average have 8.267 conversation sessions a week talking to their fathers, with an average of 22.9 min for each conversation, while children have 13.096 conversations a week with mothers, with each lasting 33.43 min on average. The figures are low considering that children spend, excluding hours of sleep, 3.75 h a day on average with their parents at home (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Frequency of parent-children conversation sessions and minutes spent in average

	Time spent (per day)	Frequency (per week)	Duration (per session)
Father	3.75 h	8.26 session	22.9 min.
Mother	3.75 h	13.09 session	33.43 min

Figure 4 shows conflict ration of parent and teenage children. 80.3 % answered that they are ‘experiencing conflict’ with parents, and when asked for methods of expressing feelings and thoughts while in conflict with parents, 71 % answered they ‘Talk directly in person’, 44 % expressing through ‘Use letters, texts and Kakao Talk

(a messenger application)', while 5 % 'Talk on the phone', yet 65 % of them still 'experience frustration for not being able to express as wanted to parents'. When asked why they could not express as wanted, they said 'scared' 'fear of not being understood' 'one sided demand from parents' 'knowing that they would not be heard anyway' 'fear of getting scolded at more' 'fear of disagreement' 'their thoughts being ignored' 'being cut while talking' and 'parents not opening to new opinions'(see Fig. 4).

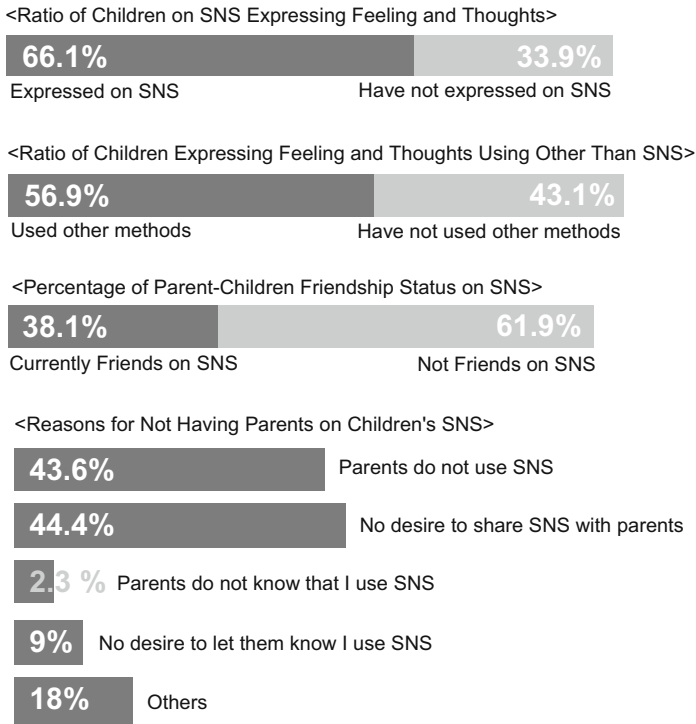


**Fig. 4.** Conflict ration of parent and respondent

In the second set of survey, 66.1 % answered that they had expressed their thoughts and feelings via Social Networks System(SNS), and 56.9 % answered that they had used other measures to do so, including conversation, writing poems, diaries, secret notes, letters, composing songs and etc. Moreover, 61.9 % is not 'friends with parents' on SNS, due to parents not using SNS, taking 43.6 %, but more than half wished not to share SNS with their parents (see Fig. 5).

## 5 Surveys Analysis

Even though the data analysis shows that the actual amount of time spent for communication is rather short, and the attitudes of parents, of pushing their thought to children and not being good at listening, while having conversations were not welcoming enough for children to fully speak of their issues to their parents, the teenage children think that they are having well-rounded communication with their parents. The rooting problem of it all is; children not expressing themselves to parents to avoid conflicts and yet defining the relationship as 'intimate'. In addition, large percentage of parents think that they respect children's opinion and are very satisfied with their



**Fig. 5.** Children’s usage of SNS for self-expression

relationship to teenage children. Therefore, there is need for an effective measure for communication, in which children would not be hindered by the parents’ attitude or negative real-time responses, that allows children to fully deliver what is on their mind and clearly sees where the relationship to their parents is.

Analyzed, the second survey showed that many adolescents use Social Network Service(SNS) to express their feelings and thoughts, while also using other measures such as conversation, writing diaries, secret notes, letters, poems, and composing songs outside of SNS, which translates that children use writing as most preferred way of expressing their thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, many teenage children showed negativity on being ‘friends with parents’ and sharing their lives on SNS for they did not wish to expose their privacy to their parents. These adds to a conclusion; the need for a third space where children can freely communicate via SNS, yet not having to worry about their privacy being exposed to parents.

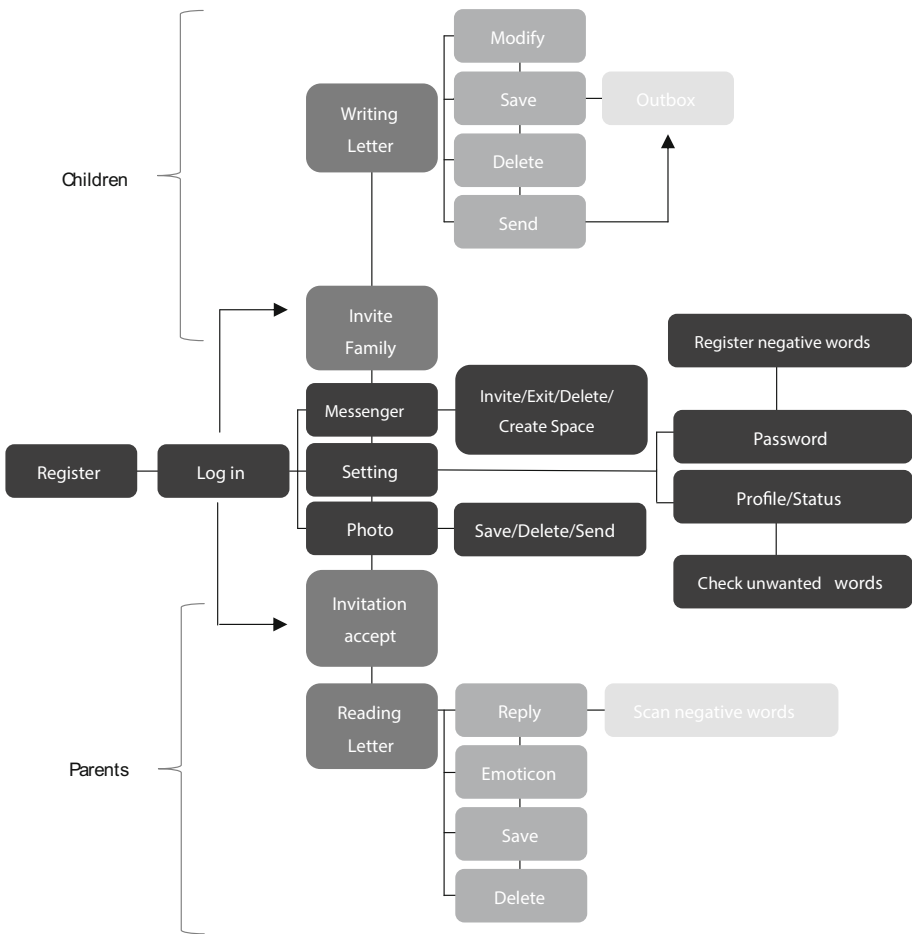
## 6 Proposal

Except direct conversation, writing is one of the main communication method that is frequently used between teenage children when delivering their thoughts and emotions. This study chose social media, particularly, mobile application as a communication



platform taking into account the preference and acquaintance of social media to the teenage children. The study proposes a closed-type of social media of novel design to prevent privacy issues of the teenage children as previous social media may contain private details the children may not wish to disclose to their parents. Taken into account of parents who are reluctant to using complicated mobile application, the proposed application contains simple contents with user interface and graphic user interface designed specifically for the sub target users, parents.

Along with shared album and small-group chatting services, there are three main features to this application. First, instead of bilateral communication, the study proposes unilateral communication, enabling single-sided delivery system from children to parents to prevent miscommunication caused by negative reactions from parents. The social media suggested by the study enables the children to become an active subject, whereas the parents are limited to only present passive reactions. In other words, the



**Fig. 6.** Contents structure and flow

teenage children may send long writings or letters, but the parents are only allowed to write up to one sentence and are offered only with positive emoticons to send.

Second, this platform contains a feature to block words, registered in advance, that teenage children do not wish to hear from their parents. This feature automatically filters negative words and recommends positive expressions with similar context upon responding to their children.

Lastly, in the surveys, despite the short communication time and conflicts between parents and teenage children, both target users showed satisfaction in the relationship. For this reason, the third main feature is added; visual data showing interaction; counts of text messages, total length of calls and more, between the parents and teenage children in a set period of time, to help understand visually how close or distant they are (see Fig. 6).

## 7 Conclusion and Limitation

This study proposed a closed-type of one-way SNS mobile application, where teenage children can freely communicate to the parents by setting children as main users, allowing them to lead conversation. Furthermore, parents were set as second users, however giving them only limited options for response to ensure that children would not be discouraged to communicate, making parents to truly listen. It is worth anticipating, with the study results and content outputs and future yet-to-be-made mobile application, improvements in family communication leading to alleviation of youth crimes in future.

There are limitations to this platform. First, if there is no active attitude and involvement from the main user, communication problems cannot be alleviated. Second, surveys and interview of parents were referenced only during the process, but were not used to fulfill the needs of parents as users in the actual service. Finally, the survey and research were conducted on population of a specific region, thus certain customs may reflect on results.

**Acknowledgments.** This research was supported by No. 20150124 of Handong Global University Research Grants. I would like to thank team MEME for all the data collected by observations, interviews and surveys.

## References

1. National Youth Policy Institute: Youth Research Brief, vol. 25 (2015)
2. OECD Health Data: Health at a Glance 2011. 1.6.1 Suicide mortality rates (2009)
3. Statistics Korea: Social Service Survey. #27 Reasons for the conflict (2014)
4. Jeong, J.G., Ill-bo, J.: <http://newshyu.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=16934>. 19 March 2015
5. OECD: PISA database, Table III.2.3a (2012)
6. Kukje News: <http://www.gukjenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=165634>. 24 November 2014

7. Narangaerell: Counsel on Conflict between Parents and Teenage Children (2015)
8. Studies on Korean Youth, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 5–34 (2015)
9. Kim, H.J.A.: Study on the Operation and Improvement of Adolescents' Shelters in Korea (2006)
10. Lee, E.K.A.: Study on the Effect of Parents-Children Dysfunctional Communication and Social Anxiety Perceived by Teenagers on School Adjustment (2012)