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RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Perspectives of Mothers with Children Aged 12–18 on Listening Barriers in Mother–Child Communication

12-18 Yaş Çocuğu Olan Annelerin, Anne-Çocuk İletişiminde Dinleme Engellerine Yönelik Görüşleri

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Abstract:

People need someone around them who listens attentively, and they enjoy talking about themselves. They feel comfortable and can more easily express their feelings in the presence of a good listener. Listening and showing that they are being listened to is the best support a person can receive. A person who can express themselves is more willing to share their experiences and knowledge. Adolescents who feel heard by their parents can express themselves comfortably and in healthy ways. Listening to a child doesn't mean fulfilling all their needs. Even just feeling listened to will meet their needs. In light of this information, the aim of this study is to examine listening barriers in communication between mothers and adolescents and thus to advance the literature. Accordingly, the views of mothers with children aged 12-18 regarding listening barriers in mother-child communication were examined. The research was designed and conducted within a phenomenological qualitative framework. The study group consisted of 20 mothers living in Konya province who had at least one child aged 12-18. Participants were asked questions from a semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. The answers were coded using MAXQDA 24, and the resulting themes were analyzed. Findings: The identified themes were "Listening Barriers" and "Solution Suggestions and Approaches." In conclusion, the mother's workload and fatigue, the communication environment, and physical barriers were among the main causes of listening barriers. The most frequently highlighted attitude and approach was judgmental and critical. Restricting the child's speech, interrupting them, and using critical, judgmental, and prejudiced language were found to create listening barriers to effective communication. The findings offer suggestions for developing parent education programs and strengthening mother-adolescent relationships. Furthermore, the study has the potential to provide a foundation for future research and family-based interventions.

Keywords: Mother-adolescent communication, Listening barriers, Adolescence.

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Öz:

İnsanlar, çevresinde onu ilgi ile dinleyen birine gereksinim duyar, ayrıca kendi ile ilgili konuşmaktan hoşlanırlar. Onu dinleyen iyi bir dinleyici; yanında kendini rahat hisseder ve duygularını daha kolay ifade eder. Dinlemek ve dinlendiğini belli etmek karşısındaki alabileceği en güzel destektir. Kendini ifade edebilen kişi, yaşadıklarını ve bildiklerini anlatma konusunda paylaşımcıdır. Ebeveynleri tarafından dinlendiklerini hisseden ergenler kendilerini rahat ifade ederek duygularını sağlıklı bir şekilde ortaya koyabilirler. Çocuğu dinlemek onun isteklerini tam anlamıyla yerine getirmek değildir. Çocuğun dinlendiğini hissetmesi bile ihtiyacını giderecektir. Bu bilgiler ışığında çalışmanın amacı, anne ve ergen arasındaki iletişimde dinleme engellerini incelemek ve bu sayede alan yazında yeni çalışmalara öncü olmaktır. Bu doğrultuda, 12-18 yaş arası çocuğu olan annelerin anne-çocuk iletişimde dinleme engellerine ilişkin görüşleri incelenmiştir. Araştırma, nitel araştırma paradigması çerçevesinde fenomenolojik desende tasarlanmış ve yürütülmüştür. Çalışma grubunu, Konya ilinde yaşayan ve 12-18 yaş aralığında en az bir çocuğa sahip olan 20 anne oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılara araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formunda yer alan sorular sorulmuş, sorulara verilen cevaplar MAXQDA 24 programı yardımıyla kodlanmış ve elde edilen temalar incelenmiştir. Bulgular: Bulunan temalar “Dinleme Engelleri” ve “Çözüm Önerileri ve Yaklaşımlar” olarak belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, annenin yoğunluğu ve yorgunluğu ile iletişim ortamı ve fiziksel engellerin dinlemenin engellenmesinde başlıca nedenler olduğu; en çok vurgulanan tutum ve yaklaşımın ise yargılayıcı ve eleştirel tutum olduğu görülmüştür. Çocuğun konuşmasının kısıtlanması, sözünün kesilmesi, eleştirel cümlelerin kullanılması, yargılama ve önyargının etkili iletişimde dinleme engellerine yol açtığı ortaya konmuştur. Elde edilen bulgular, ebeveyn eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesine ve anne-ergen ilişkilerinin güçlendirilmesine yönelik öneriler sunmaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma gelecekteki araştırmalar ve aile temelli müdahaleler için temel oluşturma potansiyeline sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siber aylaklık, Sosyal siber aylaklık, Bibliyometrik analiz, Siber güvenlik, Psikolojik etki.

Introduction

Language is a fundamental means of communication that begins in the womb and enables the child to interact with their environment. Composed of comprehension and speaking components, language starts with the listening skill acquired in the womb. Listening is defined as paying attention to sound in order to hear the speaker's voice, understand, and obtain necessary information (Ceyran, 2016). Listening is a fundamental tool for the child to understand their environment and express themselves. As a developmental process that extends over a long period, listening is a complex structure that involves acquiring information and skills (Güneş, 2007). Selecting, understanding, remembering, and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages are basic components of listening.

Listening is a fundamental element of communication and plays a critical role in the mother-child relationship. Listening involves not only hearing what is said but also understanding the child's emotions, empathizing with them, and making them feel valued (Gordon, 2019). The presence of listening barriers can reduce the quality of the mother-child relationship and negatively affect psychosocial development.

Research shows that parents' communication styles and psychological characteristics affect the quality of parent-child communication and that variables such as locus of control and self-efficacy play a mediating role in this relationship (Özbay et al., 2023).

During adolescence, family relationships are shaped by individuals' abilities to listen to and understand one another. A healthy progression of this process contributes to the individual's future development. Effective listening is important for the adolescent to express themselves, achieve emotional satisfaction, and develop a healthy identity. Köknel (1987) stated that family relationships play an important role in personality development during adolescence. Yavuzer (2001) emphasized that successfully navigating this period depends on positive family relationships.

Adolescence is a period in which, alongside physical development, mental, emotional, and social changes also occur. During this process, emotional intensity increases and social relationships change (Arnett, 2018). In the transition to adulthood, both the adolescent and the family may experience adjustment difficulties. This is particularly evident in the 12–18 age range, during which mother-child communication undergoes a transformation (Steinberg, 2020). Increased peer relationships and the search for identity can complicate family communication. Therefore, it is crucial for mothers to communicate effectively with their children and listen to them.

During adolescence, the need for independence and autonomy increases, and new balances are established in the mother-child relationship. Changes are also observed in parental attitudes, with authoritarian approaches giving way to more democratic communication based on mutual respect and understanding (Collins & Laursen, 2018).

When healthy listening does not occur in the mother-adolescent relationship, the relationship can deteriorate (Yalçın, 2002). Positive parental behaviors reduce parental and peer loneliness among adolescents and help resolve interpersonal problems (Scharf, Wiseman & Farah, 2011). However, during adolescence, listening processes in mother-child communication are exposed to various barriers. Mothers' past experiences, prejudices, time constraints, emotional states, communication skills, and environmental factors all affect this process (Patterson, 2020). Additionally, the social, emotional, and physical changes of adolescence require mothers to readjust their communication styles.

Listening barriers can weaken mother-child communication and negatively affect the adolescent's psychosocial development. An adolescent who feels unheard may gradually distance themselves from the family and avoid communication (Laursen & Collins, 2019). Research shows that effective mother-child communication increases an adolescent's self-esteem,

supports academic achievement, and reduces adjustment problems (Collins & Laursen, 2018). While positive and supportive parental attitudes foster development, negative interactions can lead to conflict and communication problems. It has been stated that these conflicts largely stem from parental attitudes and behaviors (Karataş, Mercan & Düzen, 2016).

Individuals need someone who listens to them attentively, and in such an environment, they can express their emotions more comfortably. Listening and making someone feel heard are important forms of emotional support. Adolescents who feel listened to by their parents can express themselves more openly and express their emotions in a healthy way. Today, effective listening skills are emphasized in parental education. Listening to a child does not mean fulfilling all their wishes, but rather making them feel understood.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by examining listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication among those aged 12–18. Addressing listening barriers phenomenologically, from mothers' perspectives within the Turkish family structure, contributes to understanding culture-specific communication dynamics. The findings provide suggestions for developing parental education programs and strengthening mother-adolescent relationships. Furthermore, the study has the potential to form a foundation for future research and family-based interventions.

Method

Research Model and Design

The study was conducted using a phenomenological design within the qualitative research paradigm. Phenomenology is an approach to understanding the essence of individuals' experiences of a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2020).

The phenomenon examined in this research is the listening barriers mothers experience in mother-child communication. The phenomenological approach allows for an in-depth examination of these experiences and the identification of common patterns. It also enables the systematic investigation of subjective experiences and emotional processes that are difficult to measure (Creswell, 2018).

A descriptive phenomenological approach was adopted in the research. This approach aims to present participant experiences in their natural state and free from researcher bias (Patton, 2014).

Study Group

The study group consists of 20 mothers living in Konya who have at least one child aged 12 to 18. The participants were selected using maximum variation sampling. This method aims to include the experiences of individuals with different socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds (Suri, 2011).

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Document title	Age	Education	Job	Child's age	Child's gender
A1	49	Doctorate	Public Relations Officer	16	Girl
A2	45	Bachelor's Degree	Civil servant	15	Boy
A3	40	Bachelor's Degree	Civil servant	12	Girl
A4	44	Bachelor's Degree	Civil servant	13	Boy
A5	39	Bachelor's Degree	Housewife	15	Girl
A6	46	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	12	Boy
A7	43	Bachelor's Degree	Housewife	14	Girl
A8	38	Associate Degree	Housewife	14	Boy
A9	45	Bachelor's Degree	Public Relations Officer	13	Girl
A10	44	Bachelor's Degree	Engineer	15	Boy
A11	48	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	15	Boy
A12	38	Associate Degree	Housewife	16	Girl
A13	42	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	17	Girl
A14	48	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse	16	Girl

A15	42	Doctorate	Civil servant	18	Girl
A16	45	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse	16	Boy
A17	48	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	17	Boy
A18	42	High school	Worker	14	Boy
A19	46	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse	16	Girl
A20	42	High school	Housewife	13	Girl

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 14 participants have a bachelor's degree, 2 have a doctorate, 2 have an associate degree, and 2 are high school graduates. Their ages range from 38 to 49. The occupational distribution includes 5 housewives, 4 teachers, 3 nurses, 2 employees in the communications sector, 1 worker, and 1 engineer. The gender distribution of the children is 11 girls and 10 boys.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Have at least one child between the ages of 12 and 18
- Live with the child and be in daily communication
- Have maintained current living conditions for at least six months
- Volunteer to participate in the study
- Be fluent in Turkish
- Not receiving psychiatric treatment

Exclusion Criteria:

- Not living with the child
- The child has a developmental problem requiring special education
- Have experienced major life events (such as death, divorce, etc.) recently

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form

This researcher-developed form is used to determine participants' demographic characteristics. The form includes basic information such as age, education, occupation, and information about the children.

Semi-Structured Interview Form

The main data collection tool of the research was developed based on the literature, expert opinions, and a pilot study.

Form development process:

A conceptual framework was created through a literature review.

Opinions were obtained from 5 experts in child development, communication, and child psychiatry.

Pilot interviews were conducted with three mothers to test the form.

The form was finalized based on the feedback received.

The interview form consists of opening, main, probing, and closing questions.

Interview form: consists of opening, main, deepening, and closing questions.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability refer to the accuracy of the process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data (Merriam, 2018). In qualitative research, it is necessary to address these elements (Creswell, 2021).

In this study, reliability was ensured through a systematic coding process using MAXQDA. The consistency of the codes was checked through comparisons. For validity, the triangulation method recommended by Patton (2002) was used.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis with MAXQDA 24. Thematic analysis enables the systematic classification and interpretation of data (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

During the analysis, the six-phase method developed by Braun and Clarke (2019) was used.

Research Ethics

The research was conducted in accordance with the decision dated 30.04.2025 and numbered 2025/645 of the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of the Selçuk University Faculty of Health Sciences. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and the data were reported in accordance with ethical principles.

Findings

The data were prepared by transcribing audio recordings and reports, and analyzed by repeated reading. Meaningful data were identified through line-by-line coding, and similar codes were grouped to form themes.

The data were analyzed using MAXQDA 24, and two main themes were identified: "Listening Barriers" and "Solution Suggestions and Approaches." The first theme consists of four subthemes. In total, 313 codes were assigned, 173 of which relate to listening barriers and 140 to solution suggestions.

Theme 1: Listening Barriers

The subthemes related to the listening barriers that mothers encounter when communicating with their adolescent children are shown in Figure 1.

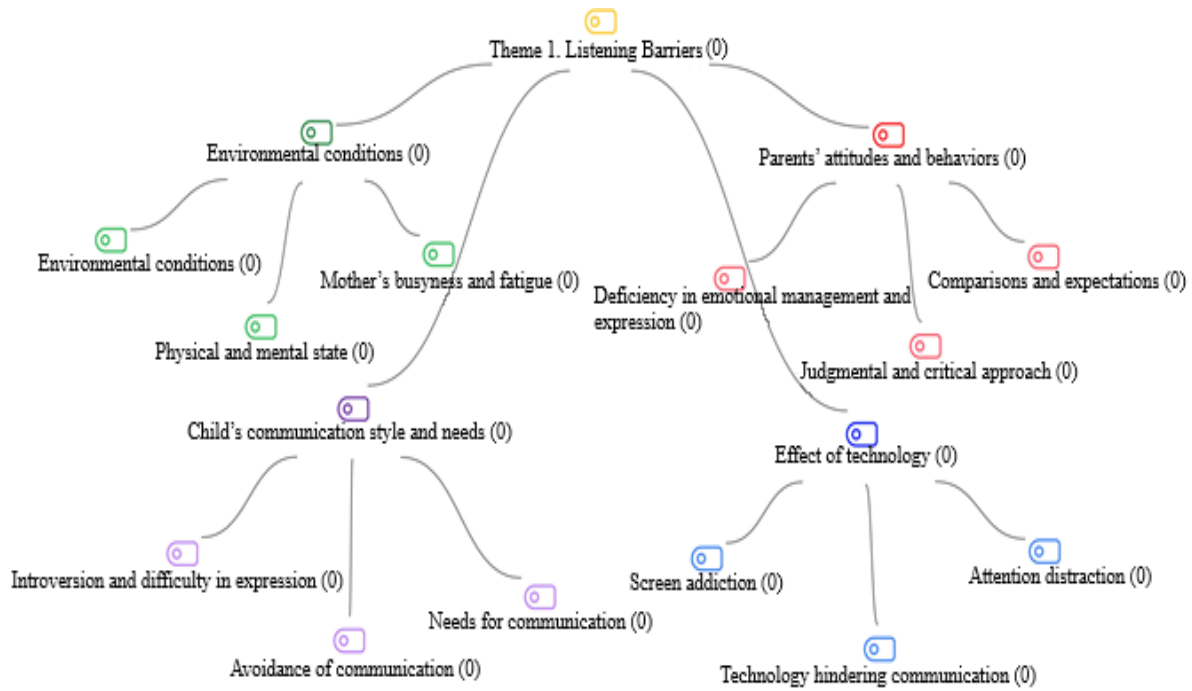


Figure 1. Listening barriers theme and subthemes

Listening barriers consist of the following subthemes: “communication environment and physical barriers,” “the child’s communication style and needs,” “the impact of technology,” and “parental attitudes.” The subtheme

“communication environment and physical barriers,” which falls under the listening barriers category, is examined in Figure 2.

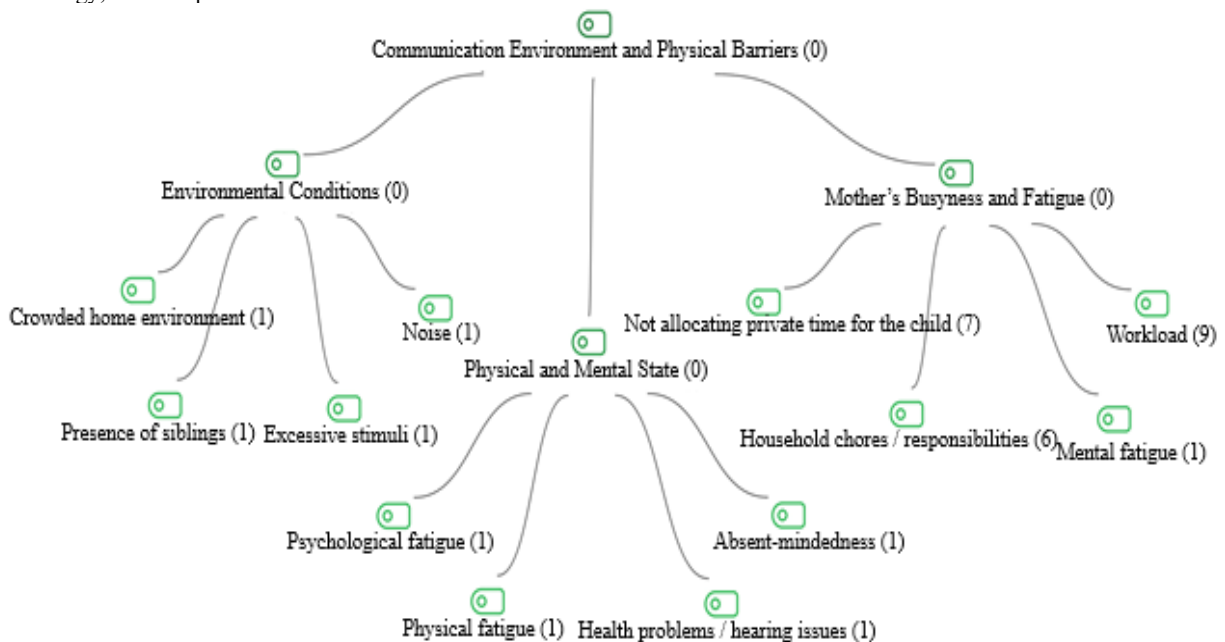


Figure 2. Communication, environment and physical barriers subtheme

The communication environment consists of factors such as environmental conditions, the mother’s physical/mental state, and her busyness. In particular, household responsibilities and work intensity make the listening process more difficult.

One of the subthemes, “the child’s communication style and needs,” is examined in Figure 3.

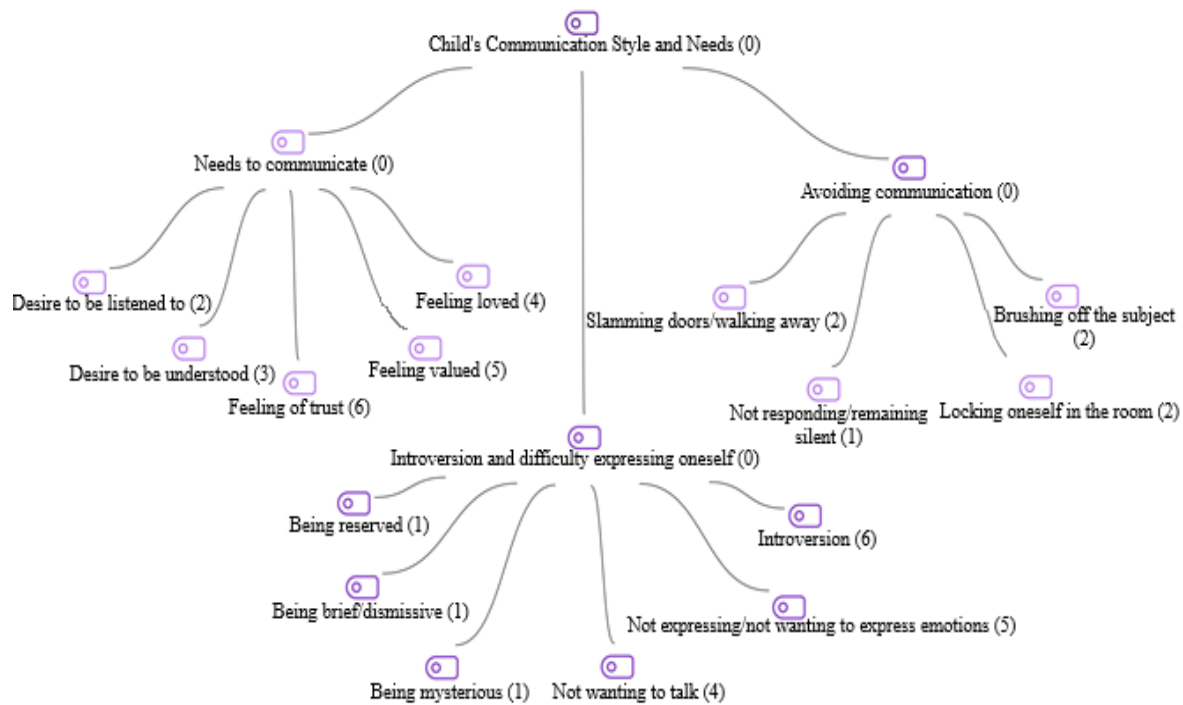


Figure 3. Subtheme, category, and codes of the child's communication style and needs

In the subtheme of the child's communication style and needs, introversion, difficulty expressing oneself, avoidance of communication, and the need to be understood stand out.

One of the subthemes of the listening barrier's theme, "the impact of technology," is examined in Figure 4.

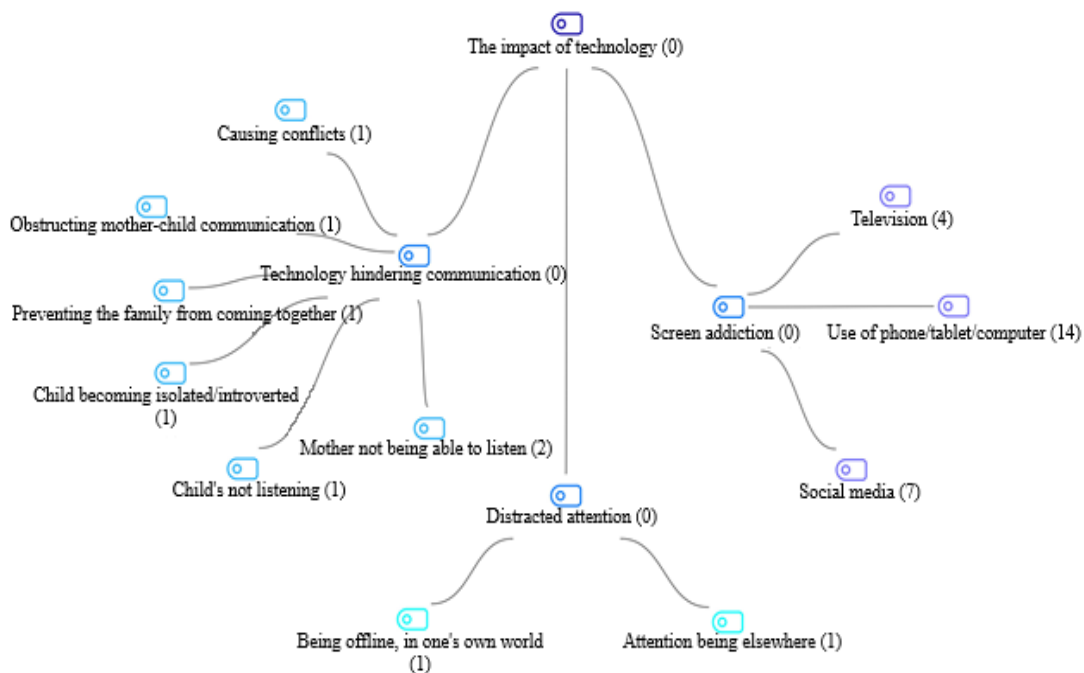


Figure 4. The theme, category, and codes of 'Effects of Technology' under the topic of listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication

Within the subtheme of technology's impact, communication barriers, distraction, and screen addiction are prominent. It has been observed that the use of phones,

tablets, and social media, especially, negatively affects the listening process. The subtheme "the impact of technology" within the theme of listening barriers is examined in Figure 5.

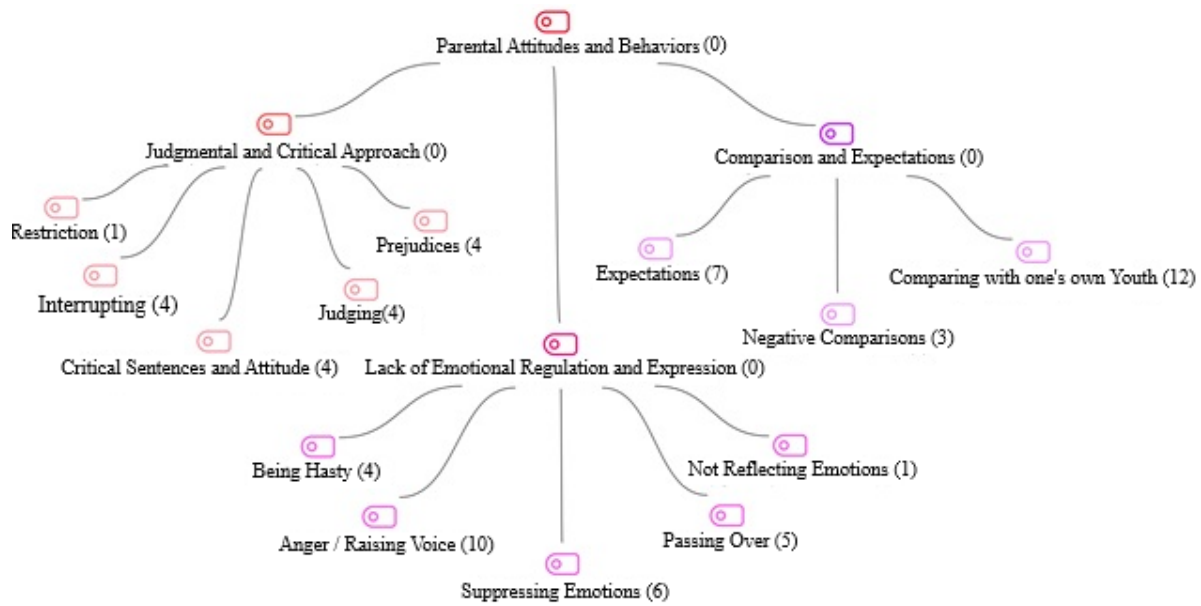


Figure 5. The subtheme, category, and codes of 'Parent-adolescent communication' regarding the listening barriers theme, under the subtheme 'Parent attitudes and behaviors'.

Under the sub-theme of parental attitudes, a judgmental approach, lack of emotional control, and comparison come to the forefront.

Theme 2: Solution Suggestions and Approaches

The theme of solution suggestions and approaches, encompassing the recommendations and strategies mothers express to overcome listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication, along with its categories and codes, is examined in Figure 6.

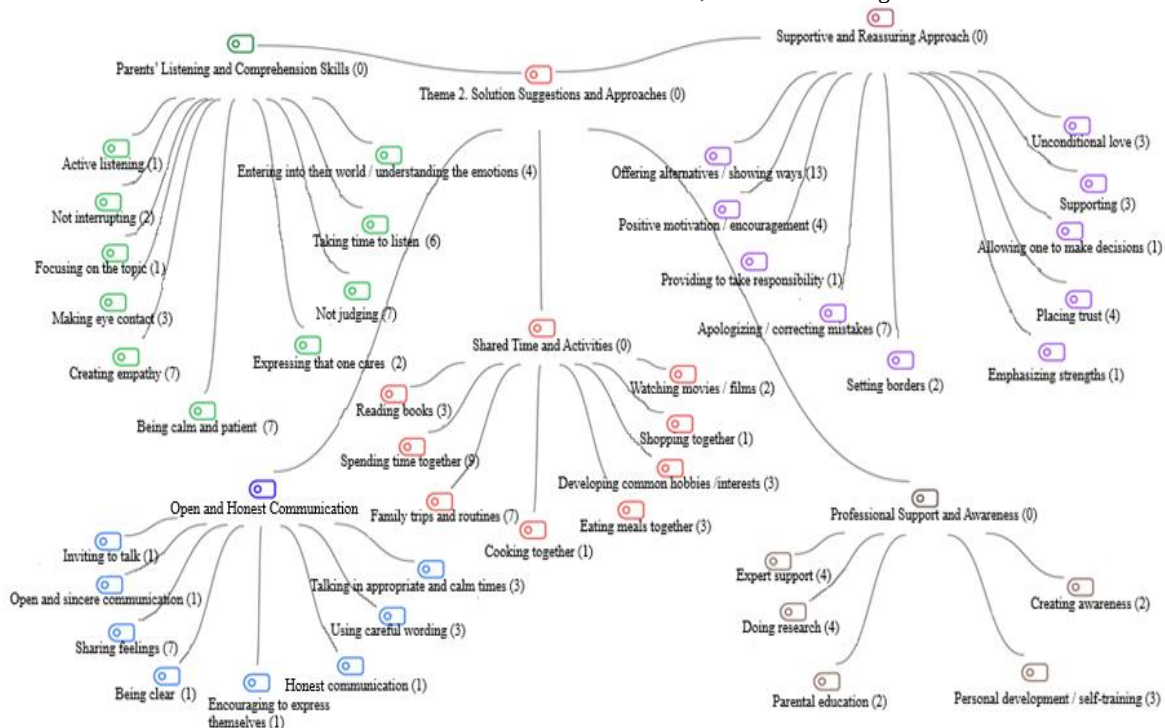


Figure 6. Theme 2. Solution Proposals and Approaches, Categories and Codes

The solution suggestions provided by mothers are grouped into the categories of "listening skills," "open communication," "shared time," "professional support," and "supportive approach."

In the listening skills category, empathy, patience, non-judgment, and making time are emphasized. In open communication, sharing emotions and choosing appropriate moments are important.

Shared time and activities (spending time together, hobbies) strengthen communication. Professional support and awareness are also seen as important solutions.

One category within the theme “solution suggestions and approaches” for overcoming listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication is “professional support and awareness.”

In the supportive approach, providing reassurance, offering motivation, and making amends for mistakes stand out.

Discussion

The research identified listening barriers in communication between mothers and adolescents as a multilayered, interactive process, categorizing them into themes such as communication environment, physical conditions, the adolescent's communication style and need, technology use, parental attitudes, and suggested solutions. The findings also emphasized that adolescent-parent communication is not just about individual skills but rather a more complex, layered interactive process. This research shows that listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication mainly arise from the mother's busyness, physical conditions, parental attitudes, and technological factors. Mothers' fatigue and lack of time reduce the quality of communication with adolescents, which may prevent them from sharing their problems. Gordon (2009) emphasizes that parents' effective listening skills are crucial in communication. In particular, parents' daily life responsibilities affect the quality of communication with their children. It has been noted that, due to busyness and time pressure, parents are unable to listen to their children adequately and tend to prefer more superficial communication, thereby demonstrating weak active listening skills (Smetana, 2017). This is one of the basic requirements of communication known as “undivided attention,” and failing to meet this requirement reduces the adolescent's willingness to express themselves (Steinberg, 2014). This can be more comprehensively explained through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. According to the theory, an individual's development and behaviors are shaped by the interaction of multilayered environmental systems. In particular, a mother's struggle to balance work and home roles can be considered an important mesosystem effect that indirectly lowers the quality of communication.

Intensive use of technology reduces parent-child interaction and weakens listening (Kildare et al., 2017). Similarly, Kavut (2018) highlighted the importance of a suitable environment for effective listening. Furthermore, the effects of distraction and digital media use on cognitive processes have also been observed. Constant notifications, multitasking, and rapid content consumption reduce individuals' capacity for sustained attention and weaken deep listening skills (Radesky et al., 2015). In this context, the research findings show that technology not only disrupts communication but also transforms individuals' attention processes. Screen addiction and social media use lead adolescents to avoid face-to-face communication and cause a decline in communication quality. The excessive time adolescents spend in digital environments reduces time available for family interaction and limits opportunities for emotional sharing (Twenge et al., 2018). Thus, it becomes more difficult to meet the adolescent's need for self-expression and understanding, resulting in

disruptions in family communication. The research also found that “the parents' judgmental attitude and lack of emotional control hinder the listening process,” emphasizing that parental attitudes are among the main determinants of the quality of communication with adolescents—a finding that strongly parallels the literature. The way parents communicate affects not only the content of the message but also the adolescent's willingness to express themselves and their sense of trust (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In terms of parental attitudes, a judgmental and critical approach appears to negatively affect communication. This is consistent with the findings of Arabacı and Ömeroğlu (2016). Cihangir (2011) states that judgment-free communication makes it easier for adolescents to express themselves. Family listening skills (empathy, patience, non-judgment, and time dedication) form the foundation of healthy parent-adolescent communication. Demonstrating empathy and non-judgmental listening helps individuals feel safe and express their emotions more easily. Research shows that a sensitive and accepting approach by parents strengthens adolescents' openness and increases the quality of communication (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013). In this context, mothers' displays of empathy and patience constitute core components of effective communication. Sharing emotions and choosing the right time—both key elements of open communication—are important factors that determine communication quality. Adolescents are able to express their emotions in a safe and appropriate communication environment. It is known that timing and open communication increase understanding between mother and adolescent and reduce conflict (Steinberg, 2014). Supportive parental attitudes increase adolescents' self-esteem and motivation to communicate, whereas critical and punitive attitudes weaken communication (Soenens et al., 2006). Meeting the child's communication needs is important for their self-expression and developing trust. Love and support within the family strengthen healthy communication (Dönmezer, 1990; Barbato et al., 2003; Gordon, 2009).

It was also found that parents' comparisons with their own adolescence negatively affect communication (Arnett, 2019; Baumrind, 2013; Laursen & Collins, 2019). Comparative behavior (making comparisons) negatively affects adolescents' self-perception and motivation to communicate. Being compared to others triggers feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness in adolescents and reduces communication with parents. This can lead adolescents to avoid self-expression and become withdrawn (Soenens et al., 2006). It is particularly noted that adolescents who are constantly subjected to comparisons develop a more distant, defensive communication style with their parents. In the study, mothers' suggestions for solutions—such as listening skills (empathy, patience, non-judgment), open communication, shared time, professional support, and a supportive approach—were found to strengthen communication. These findings are consistent with the literature, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of parenting skills depends on empathic, accepting communication (Sanders et al., 2014). Furthermore, spending quality, interactive time together strengthens the emotional bond between mother and adolescent and provides a foundation for healthy communication (Offer, 2013). Additionally, professional support and awareness are effective tools for parents to improve their communication skills.

In conclusion, this study reveals that listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication arise not only from individual shortcomings but also from the interaction of environmental conditions, technological influences, developmental processes, and parental attitudes. Accordingly, it can be suggested that intervention programs to be developed should not focus solely on communication skills; rather, they should include multi-dimensional components such as time management, coping with stress, digital awareness, empathic communication, and the organization of the family interaction environment.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that it was conducted only with mothers and did not include fathers' perspectives. In future research, examining the views of both mothers, fathers, and adolescents together may provide a more holistic understanding of family communication dynamics.

The fact that the study was conducted with mothers living in Konya and that it is limited in the diversity of mothers' educational backgrounds restricts the generalizability of the findings. Studies involving samples with different cultural and socio-economic characteristics can reveal cultural differences in listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication.

Conclusion

This research showed that listening barriers in mother-adolescent communication are multidimensional. Mothers' busyness, physical and environmental conditions, judgmental attitudes, and behaviors such as interrupting in communication limit effective communication. These barriers were found to stem from parental, environmental, and communicative factors.

The findings indicate that developing effective listening skills and avoiding judgmental attitudes can improve the quality of the mother-adolescent relationship.

In conclusion, recognizing and reducing listening barriers, expanding communication skills training, supporting mothers psychologically and physically, and improving the family communication environment are critically important for the healthy development of the adolescent and the strengthening of family relationships.

Recommendations

Recommendations for mothers include participating in training programs on communication skills, engaging in personal development activities, creating daily routines that are technology-free to spend quality time with their children, developing empathy by understanding the characteristics of adolescence, and being patient and understanding when adolescents have difficulty

expressing themselves, listening to them, and understanding their emotions—all of which will contribute to creating a secure environment.

Recommendations for educational institutions and organizations include regularly preparing “family education programs” focused on mother-child communication in schools, identifying the needs for cooperation and solutions in mother-adolescent communication within guidance services, and ensuring multidisciplinary approaches.

At the societal level, recommendations include organizing awareness campaigns on the importance of mother-child communication through the media and non-governmental organizations, establishing support groups for families experiencing similar problems, conducting focus group discussions, and developing programs to regulate technology use.

Recommendations for professionals include conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate individuals' approaches to listening barriers over time; carrying out comparative research across different socio-cultural groups; developing and testing intervention programs; including studies from children's perspectives on listening barriers; and conducting bidirectional analyses.

Declarations

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

The study was initiated with the ethical approval report dated 30.04.2025 and numbered 2025/645 by the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee of Selçuk University Faculty of Health Sciences.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

Not applicable.

Author Contributions

GT made major contributions to writing the methods and discussion sections, as well as the summary and abstract. GT also contributed to the overall writing and review of the manuscript. ŞK analyzed and interpreted the research data and also contributed to the overall writing and review of the manuscript. GT made major contributions to writing the introduction and discussion sections. ŞK made significant contributions to data collection. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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