Family Relationship in the Era of Disruption: Communication Strategy of Parents-Millennial Children

Afifah Chusna Az Zahra¹, Jainul Mukhaimin Nurofik², Mochammad Sa’id³

¹,²,³ Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author. Email: afifahchusna1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The relationship between parents and millennial children is an example of inter-generational interaction that can raise communication problems in-between. One of its factors is the development of technology. The relentless globalization, along with the rapid technology innovation, creates something called society 5.0. This study aims to comprehend the inter-generational communication strategy between parents and their children. This study employs qualitative research method. The data is obtained through interviews and observations to six parents with millennial children in Malang who are willing to be research subjects. The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis. The data employed is then validated using perspective triangulation and cross-checking on the deviant themes. The findings of this study illustrate four functional inter-generational communication strategies between parents and their children such as open communication, supportive communication for children’s potential and creativity, positive attitude in communication, and implementing equality principle. Communication plays a significant role in developing children’s empathy. Effective communication strategies between family members are notably to help in achieving shared goals and strengthening family bonds, so the members are comfortable with each other.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Parents and Millennial Children, Family Relationship.

1. INTRODUCTION

An individual’s life would be significant and worthwhile with the presence of other individual (1). An individual will be meaningless if he/she loses a relationship with a significant individual. This is in line with the individual’s self, as a psychological concept, constructed as a relationship, particularly in interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships are defined as a relationship involving two or more individuals (2). Interpersonal relationships encompass the goal of forming a personality during the early stages of development and convey a life’s meaning to an individual for the next phase of life. One form of interpersonal relationships that individuals have is within the family, particularly the relationship between parents and children.

Family is a place to develop social skills, personalities, and children's character from an early age. Through family, children are educated and guided to develop creativity, abilities, and social values that apply in society. Family is defined as a system consisting of two or more individuals who are mutually committed, share intimacy, decision making, responsibility, and values (3). Experiences that are constructed from interactions within a family will determine how children behave towards others in social interactions in society (4). The family also introduces the child to the wider environment and prepares him/her for his/her future. Family comprises a remarkably important role in the formation of a healthy personality and mental health in children (5). Interaction in a family is indicated by a good relationship, particularly between parents and children. The relationship between parents and children is learned by the child which in turn forms his/her ability to balance intimacy, closeness, and separation from other individuals.
A good relationship between parents and children in a family can be established because of communication. Communication is the process of delivering a message from the sender of the message to the message recipient (1). In the family, unquestionably, numerous messages that one family member intends to convey to another are manifested, particularly the most frequent one is the message of parents to their children. The purpose of communication between parents and children, indeed, is for children to understand the contents of the message in the form of advice and suggestions from parents. Good, precise, and clear communication within the family will prevent misunderstanding or conflict. Communication is a connection between family members to discuss and solve problems, and strengthen ties(6). Success or failure of communication can be identified from the feedback obtained (1). If the recipient of the message understands what is conveyed by the sender of the message and then the recipient responds with words or behavior in accordance with what the sender of the message presupposition, communication can be affirmed to be successful, and vice versa. In a family where one of its members is experiencing a transition period from adolescence to adulthood, open communication is an essential element in dealing with the world outside(7).

Over time, a profusion of values in society have begun to reconstruct, provoking communication problems within the family, specifically between parents and children. One of the reasons behind this, is the generational difference between parents and children from the millennial generation. The relationship between parents and children of the millennial generation is a form of intergenerational relationship, in other words, between generations X and Y. Generation X are those born in the 1961-1980 era, while generation Y is those born in the 1983-1998 era(8). The population of generation X (aged 40- 59 years) in Indonesia is utterly large, specifically 652,489 people (9). Meanwhile, the total population belonging to generation Y (aged 20 years-39 years) in Indonesia is 839,936 people. The differences in character between these generations can affect the communication patterns between the two. According to Utomo (2019), problems related to communication between parents and children are caused by various factors, such as technological developments, changes in social values, and cultural changes. Social and cultural values in society change with the times. Changes in social and cultural values can be seen from changes in lifestyle between parents and children, to be specific, millennials tend to be independent and free. This change can be demonstrated by a speedy and instantaneous lifestyle, for instance ordering food through online application.

Changes in social and cultural values in the millennial generation are supported by massive technological developments. This technological development was followed by the development of the times to give rise to a new era called the era of disruption. The era of disruption is a phenomenon when people shift activities that were initially carried out in the real world to the virtual world (10). The era of disruption as a result of globalization creates real challenges in every line of life and demands optimal integrity from individuals in order to live life well (11). The development of technology in this era of disruption has led to communication activities with many shortcuts or choices so that distance and time become increasingly meaningless. The openness of access to information is also increasingly visible where everyone can freely access a lot of information through social media (12). This condition not only makes a positive contribution to a nation, but also gives a residual impact.

The conditions above affect the communication patterns of parents and children. This communication pattern has a significant relationship with family welfare (13). Therefore, an effective strategy in communicating with children from the millennial generation is very important for parents. By implementing a good strategy, the communication will run effectively and have a positive impact on the child's life in the future. Children can be open (openness) with their parents, have strong directions in life so they do not decline into the negative impacts of the current development, and is able to take positive matter from many aspects of life. This communication strategy can be in the form of a verbal communication strategy and a non-verbal communication strategy (1). Forms of verbal communication include the use of language, intonation, speech tone or accent, and dialect while non-verbal forms of communication consist of body movements, facial expressions, eye gaze, appearance and movement style. Family communication strategies including good and appropriate communication patterns have a positive impact on children's
personality and emotional development(14). Based on the above statements, this research was conducted to understand and identify the communication strategies of parents and millennial children in the context of intergenerational relationships.

2. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was used to answer questions in research which required the researcher to conduct in-depth exploration of the problem posed. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations. The subjects in this study were parents in Malang City with the criteria of having millennial children and were willing to be participated as the subject. There were six subjects in the study (M = 44.00; SD = 3.347), consisting of four women and two men. The subjects mostly worked as entrepreneurs and private employees. The latest education degree of the subject is mostly high school, only two subjects posses Bachelor’s degree.

The data analysis technique in this study employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one approach that can be used in analyzing qualitative data (15). This analysis aims at identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes in the data. To maintain the reliability of the data, the researcher conducted a validity test. The validity test used was perspective triangulation and re-checking on deviant data themes. Perspective triangulation, known as multilevel perspective, was to use other individual’s perspective where the task of the informant was to provide an explanation as well as validate whether what the subject said was valid or not (16). There were six informants involved in this study. The criteria for the informants were that they really understood the research subject and were willing to take a part as the informant voluntarily. The second validity test used was re-checking the themes that were irrelevant or deviating based on the subjective considerations of the researcher. These deviating or irrelevant themes can be seen from the flow of the conversation which was deliberately directed to topics outside the topic being discussed and did not appear to be related to the focus of the research.

3. RESULT

The communication strategy applied by parents to children is an open communication. According to the opinion of one of the respondents, this openness in communication makes parents better understand the character and determination of children. Communication is usually carried out by parents by taking children’s free time, such as watching television together or relaxing with family, which aims to get the right timing therefore the desired communication process becomes more open. Communication between parents and children is often applied by telling stories such as a child who told the parents about events at school, activities with his/her friends, and personal problems that require advice from parents. Open communication patterns in the family require a strategy including being flexible or being able to position themselves according to situations and conditions, for instance parents sometimes take a role a friend, a friend without ignoring the child’s respect for parents. In addition, parents need to include insight into the world of children such as the current development of era and technology therefore they are able to communicate articulately and openly.

Technological developments encourage millennial children to continue to innovate, work and be creative in creating new transformation. Therefore, it takes a support (assistance) from parents. This research findings confirm that parents have communicated to support all forms of positive activities carried out by children in relation to potential development. This communication is applied by involving children in making choices and developing their creativity. The real form of parental support for children to develop their potential is that parents also provide space for children to express their ideas and then evaluate them. After being evaluated, parents ask children what should be done to support the idea. Parents support, facilitate, and provide motivation when children have positive interests and activities. Besides that, parents also give directions to children not to abuse their self-defense skills. The direction given by parents is distinctly beneficial for the development of children’s talents and interests to welcome and face the era of society 5.0. Direction to children is not only related to support to develop their potential but also to a positive attitude in communicating for instance parents maintaining communication with children and providing good examples in communication.

The findings of the study showed that the five subjects communicated with children very intensively even though the children were already busy with daily
routines such as studying, and any other school activities. Meanwhile, one subject did not communicate intensely because his child was busy with his work and they both rarely met. According to the research subject, a positive attitude in communication is shown by involving children in daily activities therefore communication will automatically occur, for example when both parents and children are cooking. In addition, parents need to provide examples of good communication, such as being good listeners and using appropriate language and easy to be understood. Communication between parents and children requires the activeness of parents in asking questions thus children feel cared for.

Communication between children and parents where the two are of different generations can potentially lead to conflict due to differences in thought patterns and opinions that are influenced by the times, for example disagreeing with one thing even though it is actually good for all. Therefore, an equality strategy is required in communicating, including by talking to one another, telling stories and consenting to openness. One of the informants stated that the conflict could occur because the child did not always receive what the parents wanted, so a strategy was required to connect the determination of the child and the wishes of the parents. Recognition that both parties are valued, appreciated and needed each other is remarkably important within communication. Equal communication between parents and children is an important component in creating harmonious and open communication with each other.

Equality in family communication requires strategies of equalizing determination, respecting each other, and restraining ego. The strategy of equalizing the determination and expectations of both parents and children is carried out by involving children such as accommodating children's ideas and holding discussions to listen to the opinions of two parties therefore a middle point of problem solving is found. After the discussion, an evaluation is conducted which aims at assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the idea. In the middle, it is given a bargaining value like what is occurred in the business context because it is not necessarily the best parent's opinion and vice versa. The expectation of the parents are collaborated with the wishes or expectations of the child therefore they find a better middle point or take a wish or expectation with the consequence that one party must be willing to give in. Parents still provide the choice of solution, but the final decision will be decided by the children themselves accordingly the parents also encourage children to think and do not appear to be restraining and coercive. The strategy for expressing the determination of the parents with the other communications is to combine the positive values of earlier era with the millennial era by providing understanding and advice. The three subjects stated that whatever the positive wishes and hopes of the child were supported by parents, in other words, the communication strategy was in the form of child support.

Communication strategy to respect each other between children and parents is performed by listening to children's opinions and paying attention to language structure in communicating each other's expectation. Clear rationalization is required to communicate opinions and ideas therefore there is no misunderstanding between the two parties. Manners and ethics in communication are also important to realize streamlined communication pathways. The strategy of respecting each other in communicating is important to prepare children for the era of society 5.0. In addition to strategies to respect each other, family communication also requires a strategy of restraining the ego or not having an inclination for giving in. The strategy of restraining the sense of ego in communication is to provide understanding to children that an idea or desire should not always be accepted thus the children are habituated to be encouraged to accept differences, allow parents and children time to think, and discuss with each other to find a way. The rest, parents are only tasked with supervising and providing support to children.

Good communication in the family plays a role in fostering a sense of empathy between children and parents. The communication that occurs between parents and children can make both parties understand and consider each other feeling. Through communication, parents are able to feel and know what their children are experiencing and wanting. The research findings also reveal that parents instill social values in children through communication such as giving straightforward advice or suggestion such as a direction to participate in community service in the home environment and even get involved in village events that require socialization with the community. The sense of empathy instilled by parents through this communication allows children to grow not only from the intellectual aspect but also from the social one.
Communication is an outstandingly essential element in building relationships between one person and another as well as parents and children. In communication, it is necessary to choose the right pattern therefore the message can be received properly. Based on the research results, the communication pattern applied by parents to their children is an open communication pattern. Communication is usually carried out by parents by taking children's free time such as watching television or spending a spare time with family. In line with previous research, family communication strategies are based on mutual enjoyment and comfort, in other words parents try to discuss with children and create open dialogue in the family while adolescents share opinions and negotiate well accordingly they are open to each other (13). The presence of family free time such as at family dinner can encourage open communication and provide opportunities for children to discuss problems experienced and advance their coping strategies (17). A democratic, open, and culturally interactive communication patterns is ultimately capable of determining the success of the socialization process in children (18). Communication comprises of numerous benefits in the family context, one of which is building good relationships and attachment between parents and children(19). A great number of conflicts are caused by misunderstanding between the person delivering the message and the recipient of the message. This frequently occurs in the family context, particularly if the parents and children are from different generations. Therefore, openness is required in communicating.

Openness in communication might encourage parents to better understand the character of the child and the things that the child might want. Open communication is considered effective in order to be a preventive effort against unwanted conflict that occur, particularly in the development of a quite different era between parents and children. In line with previous studies, the communication patterns used by families are more dominant using the open model than the closed communication model (20). Other studies also reveal that the communication patterns within a family, specifically parents and children, are practiced by traditional parents and modern parents (21). Traditional parents try to establish a close relationship with their child accordingly the child can feel comfortable and open to the parent. Meanwhile, modern parents attempt to make their children like friends thus within their interaction, a closeness between the child and the parent and vice versa is occurred. Open communication in a family plays an essential role in minimizing and preventing juvenile delinquency(22).

Open communication strategy occurred in the family is defined as parents for being flexible in which the parents are able to place themselves among children according to situations and conditions, for instance sometimes they can take a role as friends or close friends without reducing the child's respect to the parents. Parents also require to include an insight about the world of children such as the current development of era and technology. This open communication is very important for children's readiness in facing and dealing with the era of disruption which can be used as a provision and foundation for children when meeting and collaborating with others. In line with previous research findings, an effective intergenerational communication strategy will occur when there is openness between parents and children (23). Openness in communication between parents and children can make parents better understand the potential of children and provide support for choices and the development of children's creativity. When parents support, motivate, give freedom to children but cannot be separated from parental supervision and reward children for their work, the child will feel more confident and more enthusiastic in advancing their passion (24).

The actual and tangible form of support provided by parents is to provide space for children to express their ideas and then provide them evaluations required. In addition, parents provide the leading direction for children and frequently communicate in order to provide guidance for children in facing the current development of era. In line with the results of previous research, the formation of children's character and readiness in facing the era of society 5.0 cannot be separated from the important role of parents carried out through family education (25). Family education plays a role in directing, guiding and setting positive examples for children so they are able to face the challenges occurred in the era of disruption (26). The role of parents in educating children is not only limited to directing or guiding children when experiencing difficulties but also providing support to children. This support is able to increase children's enthusiasm and strength in facing all the demands and challenges in
facing the times. Support from parents and teachers affect the development of children's creative thinking skills (27). In addition to providing support to children through communication, parents also require to show a positive attitude, one of which is by continuing to take time to communicate with children.

The research findings show that most of the informants are intense in communicating with children. Another positive attitude that parents can show when communicating with their children is to set an example for children to be good listeners and to use proper and easy-to-understand language. Interpersonal communication will effectively run if an individual possesses a positive attitude towards himself/herself and others (28). A positive attitude that can be exemplified to children is to get used to communicating in language that is decent, systematic and easy to understand(23). When speaking in an orderly and structured manner, the use of words and language structure is in accordance with what is meant, so both parents and children can convey what they feel calmly without having to feel irritated when using ineffective and improper words as well as high intonation. Children who are accustomed to communicating well will have ethics when communicating with others. A positive attitude in communication is an important component in determining the success or failure of communication (19).

Communication between children and parents where the two are from different generations can potentially lead to conflict due to differences in thought patterns and opinions that are influenced by the changing era. Therefore, an equality strategy is required during the process of communication, including strategies in equalizing determination, respecting one another, and restraining the ego. Strategies in equalizing the determination of parents can be done by discussing with each other to find a middle point, combining positive values in the past and recent times, and supporting all the positive wishes and expectations of children. Communication strategies to respect each other between children and parents are by listening to children's opinions and paying attention to the language use in communicating each other's desires. This equality does not require an individual to accept and approve all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication of other people's behavior but to accept and give positive unconditional rewards (28). The importance of equality of communication in the family was revealed by previous research, which specifically argued that equality between parents and children in communication needs to be fostered (23). One form of equality in communication is when making decisions, parents and children understand each other's expectations and discuss each other (29). In addition, the freedom to express opinions and support from parents provides opportunities for children to learn to make decisions independently.

The way to decently communicate with millenial children these days is to respect and take into consideration of each other business so as to create a comfortable and convenient atmosphere when communicating. One of the factors that causes conflict in a family context is a different perception(19). The way parents perceive things is influenced by past knowledge and experiences which are often used as their standards in educating and directing their children. Unquestionably, such kind of thoughts and opinions of parents cannot always be accepted by children. Children who live in the current social setting are greatly influenced by the advancement of science and technology, accordingly they tend to have a great deal of different perceptions with their parents.

Well-established communication within the family plays a role in fostering a sense of empathy between children and parents. Communication is capable of making parents and children take a consideration of what each other feels. The results of the study reveal that parents instill social values in children through communication in terms of giving advice, for instance a direction to participate in community service in the social setting environment and even participate in the community events that require children to socialize with community. Empathy is an individual ability to understand what other people are experiencing at a certain moment from another individual's point of view or in other words, taking into consideration of something that other people feel (28). By demonstrating empathy, it allows parents to understand and perceive what their children are doing. When parents demonstrating empathy for children, the parents will understand and comprehend the life or development of their children. This sense of empathy can be a provision for children to face and deal with the era of society 5.0. In line with these results, the results of previous studies reveal that there is a positive influence between communication within the family on children's empathy(30). Other previous research also states that the form of parental empathy
is shown by the parents' understanding of the children social advancement context, providing information about life boundaries that the child must understand, and then parents can discuss the things that are felt by the child (28).

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals communication strategies between parents and their millennial children in a cross-generational context. The strategies consist of four types: implementing open communication, supportive communication, positive attitude in communication with children, and implementing equality principle. The first strategy is openness in communication. This strategy aims to know and understand each other regarding problems and affairs, therefore nothing should be covered up among them. The second strategy is supportive communication. Such strategy is done by providing support to children to develop their potential and creativity. The third strategy is positive attitude in communicating with children. It is applied by maintaining communication with children and being good model in communication, such as being good listeners and choosing the proper language. In addition, parents also apply equality principle in communicating with their children. It requires mutual respect and restrains the ego between both of them. It promotes an opportunity to reduce conflict and allows children to be more open to their parents who play a role in fostering empathy. This empathy can stimulate parents and children to understand each other.

Based on empirical results of this study, future research might investigate communication strategy of parents-millennial children from millennial children’s perspective. It is hoped that it can complement the perspective of the parents who have been studied in this study.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally in this study from data collection to writing research report.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research is supported by Faculty of Psychology Universitas Negeri Malang.

REFERENCES

[1] Faturochman, Nurjaman TA. Psikologi Relasi Sosial. Yogyakarta: PUSTAKA PELAJAR; 2018.
[2] Abadi TW, Sukmawan F, Utari DA. Media Sosial Dan Pengembangan Hubungan Interpersonal Remaja Di Sidoarjo. CANAL. 2013;02(1):95–106.
[3] Olson D, DeFrain J, Skogrand L. Marriages & families: Intimacy, diversity, and strengths. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2011.
[4] Gerungan W. Psikologi Sosial. Bandung: Refika Aditama; 2010.
[5] Fahrudin A. Keberfungsian Keluarga: Konsep Dan Indikator Pengukuran Dalam Penelitian (Functioning Family: Concept And Measurement Indicator In Research). 2012;17(02):75–81. Available from: https://e-journal.kemsos.go.id/index.php/Sosioinforma/article/viewFile/94/62
[6] Noh CHC, Yusoff F, Hasim MS. Communication Patterns of Malay Families in Terengganu, Malaysia. Procedia - Soc Behav Sci [Internet]. 2013;102(Ifee 2012):635–42. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.781
[7] Zambianchi M, Enrico P, Bitti R. The Role of Proactive Coping Strategies, Time Perspective, Perceived Efficacy on Affect Regulation, Divergent Thinking and Family Communication in Promoting Social Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood. 2014;116(5):493–507.
[8] Utomo WP. Generasi Eksplorasi. IDN Research Institute. Jakarta: IDN Times; 2019.
[9] BPS. Statistik Indonesia [Internet]. 2019. Available from: https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2019/07/04/da/ac1ba18cae90706ee58a/statistik-indonesia-2019.html
[10] Hidayat I. Tantangan Masyarakat di Era Disrupsi [Internet]. Radar Jember. 2019. Available from: https://radarjember.jawapos.com/opini/07/12/2019/tantangan-masyarakat-di-era-disrupsi/
[11] Sufirmansyah. Actualization Of Andragogical Learning Strategies For Higher Education In Disruption Era. Didakt Relig [Internet]. 2018;6(2):351–70. Available from:
Lalo K. Menciptakan Generasi Milenial Berkarakter dengan Pendidikan Karakter guna Menyongsong Era Globalisasi. J Ilmu Kepol. 2018;12(2):68–75.

Charoenthewesub M, D CLHP. Thai Family Communication Patterns: Parent-Adolescent Communication and the Well-Being of Thai Families. Spec Issue Int J Comput Internet Manag. 2011;19(SPI):1–6.

Hastasari C, Aw S, Hajaroh M. Family’S Communication Pattern in Preventing Students’ Violence in Yogyakarta. Informasi. 2018;48(2):155–68.

Herdiiansyah H. Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif untuk Ilmu Psikologi. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika; 2015.

Elgar FJ, Craig W, Trites SJ. Family dinners, communication, and mental health in Canadian adolescents. J Adolesc Heal [Internet]. 2013;52(4):433–8. Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.07.017

Setyowati Y. Pola Komunikasi Keluarga dan Perkembangan Emosi Anak (Studi Kasus Penerapan Pola Komunikasi Keluarga dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Perkembangan Emosi Anak pada Keluarga Jawa). J ILMU Komun. 2013;2(1):67–78.

Helmawati. Pendidikan Keluarga: Teoretis dan Praktis. Bandung: ROSDA; 2014.

Rini YS. Komunikasi Orangtua-Anak dalam Mengambil Keputusan Pendidikan. Komun Orangtua-Anak dalam Pengambilan Keputusan Pendidik [Internet]. 2014;3(2):112–22. Available from: https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/interaksi/article/viewFile/8777/7103

Fitriani A. Pengaruh Komunikasi Dalam Keluarga Terhadap Komunikasi Empati Remaja [Internet]. Universitas Negeri Jakarta; 2018. Available from: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/223126067.pdf