

Family Communication Patterns Among Gen Z With Mental Disorder In Bandung

Ikhlazul Amal¹, Dindin Dimyanti²

¹ Communication Science, Faculty of Communication and Social Science, Telkom University, Indonesia, kalajenkingkayang@student.telkomuniversity.ac.id

² Communication Science, Faculty of Communication and Social Science, Telkom University, Indonesia, rakeanwastu@telkomuniversity.ac.id

Abstract

Mental health disorders among Indonesia's Generation Z have reached alarming levels, with family communication being important to psychological healing. This study uses Segrin & Flora, (2019) Family Communication Patterns Theory to investigate family communication patterns among Gen Z persons diagnosed with mental problems and their parents in Bandung. A qualitative technique using semi-structured interviews was used, with five Gen Z informants (ages 21-24) experiencing depression, anxiety, ADHD, and burnout. Thematic analysis identified four main patterns: (1) maternal-centered emotional bonding and selective openness, (2) negotiated familial authority that balances parental control with conditional autonomy, (3) dialogic communication marked by gradual disclosure and emotion regulation, and (4) adaptive conflict management that combines avoidance and mediated resolution. The findings show that, while conversation orientation exists, it acts within conformity bounds, with moms functioning as the major emotional gatekeeper. Empathy, affirmation, and cultural norms are examples of facilitators, whereas barriers include generational differences, stigma, and fear of being judged. This study provides empirical data on how family communication affects mental health outcomes in collectivist Indonesian environments, with practical implications for family-based therapies and mental health support systems adapted to urban Gen Z populations.

Keywords: Family Communication, Gen Z, Mental Health Disorders, Bandung, Communication Patterns Theory.

Abstrak

Gangguan kesehatan mental di kalangan Generasi Z di Indonesia telah mencapai tingkat yang mengkhawatirkan, dengan komunikasi keluarga memainkan peran kritis dalam pemulihan psikologis. Studi ini menganalisis pola komunikasi keluarga antara individu Generasi Z yang didiagnosis dengan gangguan mental dan orang tua mereka di Bandung, menggunakan Teori Pola Komunikasi Keluarga Segrin & Flora, (2019). Pendekatan kualitatif dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur digunakan, melibatkan lima informan Gen Z (usia 21-24) yang mengalami berbagai kondisi kesehatan mental, termasuk depresi, kecemasan, ADHD, dan kelelahan. Analisis tematik mengidentifikasi empat pola utama: (1) ikatan emosional berpusat pada ibu dan keterbukaan selektif, (2) otoritas keluarga yang dinegosiasikan, menyeimbangkan kontrol orang tua dengan otonomi bersyarat, (3) komunikasi dialogis yang ditandai dengan pengungkapan bertahap dan regulasi emosi, dan (4) manajemen konflik adaptif yang menggabungkan penghindaran dengan resolusi yang dimediasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun orientasi percakapan ada, ia beroperasi dalam batas-batas kepatuhan, dengan ibu berperan sebagai penjaga emosional utama. Faktor pendorong meliputi empati, validasi, dan nilai-nilai budaya, sementara hambatan mencakup perbedaan generasi, stigma, dan ketakutan akan penilaian. Studi ini memberikan bukti empiris tentang bagaimana komunikasi keluarga memengaruhi hasil kesehatan mental dalam konteks kolektif Indonesia, menawarkan implikasi praktis untuk intervensi berbasis keluarga dan sistem dukungan kesehatan mental yang disesuaikan dengan populasi Gen Z perkotaan.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Keluarga, Generasi Z, Gangguan Kesehatan Mental, Bandung, Teori Pola Komunikasi.

I. PENDAHULUAN

Mental health in adolescents and young adults has become an urgent global issue, with proven data showing that globally, around 1 in 7 children aged 10–19 years experience mental disorders, confirming that adolescence is a critical phase in emotional and social development where factors such as social pressure, identity formation, and family communication patterns significantly shape mental health outcomes (World Health Organization (WHO), 2022). The

global burden of these disorders is substantial. Data analyzed from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021 shows that in 2021 there were an estimated 279 million cases of mental disorders among individuals aged 10-24 years, showing a large proportion of years lived with disability, with anxiety, depression, and ADHD identified as the most common conditions Wang et al. (2025). In Indonesia, mental health issues among Gen Z are also a serious problem, as proven by a survey by national research conducted by I-NAMHS in collaboration with Gadjah Mada University, which revealed that around 2.45 million adolescents in Indonesia experienced mental disorders in the last 12 months (CNN Indonesia, (2022)). This increasing phenomenon is occurring because of the advancement of technology, which is one of the causes, among other factors. While technological advancements bring many benefits, they also present significant social pressures.

This research will include families in Bandung, particularly those with members aged 15 – 24, representing Gen Z, who have been diagnosed with mental diseases like as depression, anxiety, or other psychological disorder. Bandung was decided as the location for this study because it has a high rate of mental disorders among teens and young adults, as recorded in the 2023, (Survei Kesehatan Indonesia (SKI) 2023). By selecting this age group, this study aims to gain a better and deeper understanding of how communication patterns within families can affect the mental well-being of young people facing mental disorders. By involving family members affected by mental disorders, it is hoped that healthier and more constructive communication patterns can be identified, which can provide early support for adolescent mental health. This is also in keeping with the findings of a study by (Clark, 2015), which showed that poor communication within the family can exacerbate symptoms of depression in adolescents.

The research problems in this study are formulated as clear and specific question to guide the investigation into family communication and mental health among Gen Z in urban Indonesia. How do the family communication patterns influence the emotional well being of Gen Z individual with Mental Disorders? what types of family communication contribute most to the coping mechanism and psychological resilience of Gen Z members facing mental health challenges ? how do tensions between autonomy and connection emerge in family interaction, and how do they have impact the negotiation of emotional needs between Gen Z and their parents ?

This indicates a gap in the mental health support system available for Gen Z, especially in an urban environment like Bandung, where they should have easier access to mental health resources (Survei Kesehatan Indonesia (SKI) 2023), the concerning of Gen Z that experience mental health issue, which explained previously, become the research subject of this research itself. Also, the important of Mental health is a foundation for emotions, resilience, hope, learning, thinking, communication, and self-esteem for Gen Z itself.

II. TINJAUAN LITERATUR

A. Family Communication

The Role of Communication in the Family as the Foundation of Relationships Between family members, family communication serves as an important basis for building harmonious relationships between family members. Cohen & Wills (1985) state that effective communication within the family can improve emotional bonding, improve social support, and help reduce anxiety and depression levels among family members. Furthermore, Sawitri et al. (2024) found that healthier family communication patterns are negatively associated with internalizing problems among adolescents. Thus, these findings indicate that effective family communication is not only theoretically sound but also empirically relevant in Indonesian sociocultural text. Family communication plays a crucial role in the context of mental health. The influence of family communication on the mental health of family members: open and empathetic family communication is very important in supporting the mental health issues of family members, especially those with mental disorders. Research by Cohen & Wills (1985) says that emotional support delivered through family communication plays a significant role in reducing stress levels and accelerating recovery in individuals experiencing mental disorders. They added that attentive and understanding communication creates a sense of security, which is crucial in overcoming anxiety or depression.

This research is going to focused in one theory which is from Segrin & Flora, (2019) family communication theory because this theory provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for considering how family communication patterns influence emotional relationships, conflict resolution, and the psychological well-being of family members. The four dimension in family communication theory are ;

a. Conversation Orientation

In the context of Gen Z families experiencing mental disorders, conversation orientation plays an important role in establishing open communication about the child's psychological condition. Families with a high level of conversation are usually better able to recognize the early symptoms of mental disorders and provide emotional support from an early stage.

b. Conformity Orientation

In families that strongly focus on conformity, Gen Z with certain mental health conditions (such as depression or anxiety) often feel unaccepted because their behaviour is considered “different.” The pressure to conform can worsen mental health conditions.

c. Family Cohesion

Family cohesion is a strong protective factor for Gen Z's mental health. When family relationships are strong and rich in emotional attachment, children with mental disorders feel safe to express themselves and seek support.

d. Conflict Management

Mental disorders often spark conflict within families—for example, due to differing opinions about a child's behavior, how to handle it, or a loss of understanding. How families manage conflict greatly affects a child's emotional stability.

III. METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

A paradigm is a way of understanding the complexity of the real world. Paradigms are deeply rooted in the socialization of their believers and followers. Paradigms show them what is important, valid, and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, showing their followers what to do without the need for lengthy existential or epistemological considerations.(Mulyana, 2003). Paradigms give guidelines on what is to be considered important, valid, and logical. In addition, they act as norms, guiding experts on how to deal with complex existential or epistemological questions, regardless of the uncertainties that may arise. (Mulyana, 2003). Research paradigms are divided into post-positivism, transformative, pragmatic, and constructivism. The philosophy of the post-positivism paradigm is that there are causes that can dictate a specific result or effect. Issues discussed in the post-positivism paradigm usually identify causes that can influence results (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This study is based on an interpretive (constructivist) paradigm, which views social reality as the result of meaning constructed by human interaction. This paradigm is used because the study focuses on understanding how family communication shapes the experiences and perceptions of Gen Z with mental disorders in the city of Bandung.

In a study, the data collection process is an important step and works as a key stage. Qualitative researchers must obtain data from an “emic perspective,” meaning that they should not obtain data “as it should be,” based on what the researchers think, but rather based on what actually happens when researcher doing interview , Data collection should be conducted in the participants own natural environment to assure authenticity and avoid researcher induce bias. (Creswell & Poth, 2018.what is experienced, felt, and thought by the participants/data sources (Sugiyono, 2013).

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In this research, Researcher will source triangulation and technique triangulation to ensure data reliability. Source triangulation is conducted by interviewing child of Gen Z families dealing with mental health issues to compare perspectives within the family. Technique triangulation involves using interviews and observations on the same subjects to verify findings. This method strengthens the validity of data on family communication dynamics among Gen Z families in Bandung facing mental health challenges.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result Findings

A. Perceived Family Support and Emotional Bonding

This section examines how informants view familial support and emotional relationships in dealing with their mental health issues. According to the interview results, the majority of informants rated their families as emotionally supportive, as well as providing attention and guidance. This support was not always provided in the form of a direct and complete knowledge of the informants' mental states, but it was nonetheless seen as a sign of great concern and emotional attachment. According to the findings, informants perceive family support as an important feature that provides them with a sense of security and comfort. Several informants reported that their families provide a secure area when they are experiencing emotional discomfort, anxiety, or unstable mental health. This impression of support reinforces the emotional tie between informants and their families, which is central to the concept of family cohesion.

B. Openness and Supportiveness in Family Communication

This theme characterizes a communication pattern within the family that is marked by emotional support, openness and willingness to have meaningful conversation. The family is seen as a somewhat safe place for people to share their thoughts, feelings and personal experience including mental health concerns in the framework of discussion orientation. Communication is not limited to specific themes and occurs in a setting that promotes two way discourse. The family ability to listen, pay attention and demonstrate empathy which makes people feel appreciated and not judged is another indication of open communication. This communication pattern functions as a coping strategy for handling emotional stress and enables a shared process of meaning making around the issues encountered.

C. Negotiated Familial Authority and Value Alignment

This theme shows how the informant's family maintain parental authority and family values as the main reference points, but do not apply them strictly or coercively. Instead of using direct coercion, in this situation compliance is developed through discussion, negotiation and guidance. Children are still allowed little room to voice their own opinions as long as they do not fundamentally contradict family norms, but parents especially dads and mothers act as guardians of values and normative decision makers.

D. Dialogic and Emotion Regulated Conflict Resolution

This theme shows that how family manage conflict through dialogue, emotional control and preventing conflict from intensifying. Conflict is not expressed explosively or confrontational but rather handled through discussion after the situation has calmed down, listening to each other's perspectives and finding mutually acceptable solutions. This pattern shows that conflict is seen as something that needs to be managed, not avoided altogether and has the potential to strengthen the family relationships when handled openly and in a controlled manner. In this case, conflict management also acts as an emotional protection system, especially for people who are mentally sensitive. By focusing on calm and respectful communication, family create a relatively safe space to talk about differences without making family members feel worse.

Discussion

This study highlights the influence of family communication patterns between Gen Z individuals and their parents on the discussion and management of mental health concerns within the family. The result demonstrate that communication is defined by a dynamic interaction between openness and control illustrating both the existence of conversation orientation and conformation as suggested by Segrin & Flora (2019). Also the findings indicate that the family try to maintain open communication via conversation, advice and emotional support. This openness is frequently restricted by parental control and generational differences leading to a limited expression of opposing viewpoints. Thus, this indicate that conversation direction functions within the confines of conformity expectations rather than as a completely balanced interaction. Concerning the second research question, emotional support, maternal empathy and shared cultural or religious beliefs are identified as essential facilitators of family communication, improving the family cohesion despite persistent conflicts. At the same time, barriers such as rigid parental beliefs, fear of conflict and anxiety experienced by Gen Z members limit their emotional disclosure that related to mental health. The application of a conversational approach in daily communication tends to be situational. Family often hold/postpone discussion until emotions have subsided, combining open dialogue with avoidance strategies. While this approach may prevent immediate conflict escalation that can be also result in unresolved issues that impact in trust and emotional comfort within the family.

A. Communication Patterns Between Gen Z and Parents

The research indicates that communication patterns between Generation Z persons with mental health issues and their parents are mostly characterized by openness, emotional support, and selective sharing of information. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that openness in family communication does not always mean full emotional disclosure. Emerging adults use selective self-disclosure, especially when discussing sensitive mental health topics, to manage emotional fragility and maintain relational harmony (Bülow 2022). Family often show a willingness to communicate. However, the level of openness often varies and is shaped by the relationship, rather than being completely equal. This was explain to in previous studies from Baudat (2022) Adolescents govern the information they communicate with parents using diverse tactics, including voluntary disclosure, secrecy, and concealment, which reflects relational dynamics rather than uniform openness. This dynamic suggests that fostering a stronger connection could enhance understanding and support for mental health challenges. Encouraging dialogue and mutual respect may help bridge any gaps in communication, ultimately benefiting both generations. despite persistent conflicts. At the same time, barriers such as rigid parental beliefs, fear of conflict and anxiety experienced by Gen Z members limit their emotional disclosure that related to mental health. The application of a conversational approach in daily communication tends to be situational. Family often hold/postpone discussion until emotions have subsided, combining open dialogue with avoidance strategies. While this approach may prevent immediate conflict escalation that can be also result in unresolved issues that impact in trust and emotional comfort within the family.

B. Barriers and Facilitators Influencing Family Communication Between Parents and Gen Z Members with Mental Disorders in Bandung.

The second research concern investigates the barriers and facilitators that influence family communication. The findings reveal that emotional and psychological barriers exist alongside relational and cultural facilitators, resulting in a dynamic communication environment. Emotional strain, which shows itself as pressure, worry, and a fear of miscommunication, is one significant obstacle (Vladislav 2024). One informant said, "There is a little pressure because there are different ways of thinking" (Informant 2, AD), describing how communication gaps caused them to feel psychologically burdened. "It usually makes me feel anxious, afraid of making mistakes" (Informant 3, ND) is how another informant described feeling more anxious when making decisions. This is consistent with research showing that in order to establish mutual understanding and trust, emotional barriers in parent-child communication frequently need to be overcome (Gao et al., 2024). Several informants reported initially withdrawing or being silent during times of distress. One Informant saying that "I find myself difficult to express, so I'm more dominant to shut myself" (Informant 2, AD). These Findings showing that emotional pain might affect family connections' perceived safety and communication confidence. According to longitudinal research, parents and teenagers who communicate openly and respectfully are less likely to have common mental health issues (Zapf 2024). Furthermore, adolescents who experience negative and avoidant family communication are more likely to experience stress in their life, which makes them more susceptible to anxiety and depression (Huang 2023). Thus, the communication patterns found in this study include a combination of openness, emotional support, and intentional self-regulation. This study builds on previous studies by revealing that conversation-oriented family communication does not always indicate free-flowing emotional expression, especially in families dealing with mental health issues.

C. Application of Conversational Approaches in Daily Family Communication with Gen Z Members Diagnosed with Mental Disorders.

In terms of conversational approaches, the data indicate that families use emotion management, delayed involvement, mediation, and reflective discourse as adaptive communication strategies. Emotional management before participating is typical practice. Informants reported actively calming themselves before starting conversations, which is in line with research relating parental emotion control to enhanced family dynamics and adolescent mental health (Ghazwani 2022). With one Informant saying that, "I calm myself down first, then I can communicate about what happened" (Informant 2, AD). Mediated communication emerges as another important conversational tactic. Siblings and mothers commonly act as mediators in conflicts, helping parents to converse more successfully. The mediation role of siblings, in particular, is consistent with accumulating evidence that they are an important protective factor and source of emotional support in family systems (Yakubu et al., 2023). One informant described how family members coordinated mediation efforts, saying, "Me and my sister were as neutral as possible and tried to be the solution" (Informant 1, VM). This mediated technique demonstrates an adaptive transfer of communicative duty within the family. It is important to note that conflict is not only viewed as something destructive. Overall, these

findings indicate that families employ a flexible and context-sensitive approach to conversation. This ability to adapt is a key feature of family resilience, enabling the system to overcome profound challenges by changing strategies to maintain stability and promote healing (Stanley & Markman 2020)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examines how family communication patterns between parents and Generation Z members with mental disorders in Bandung City affect emotional support, psychological recovery, and conflict resolution. Family communication patterns, variables that hinder and support family communication, and the employment of a conversational approach in daily family communication with Gen Z members with mental problems are the subject of this study.

This study shows that Gen Z with mental disease in Bandung have dynamic and consistent family communication patterns, but moderate to high conversation orientation patterns predominate, especially in mother-child relationships. Family becomes the main source of emotional support, providing security, affirmation, and mental health professional access. The emotional openness that built is incomplete since some informants still limit their self-expression due to personal responsibility, fear of family load, and parental criticism.

By showing how the four dimensions of Family Communication Patterns (Segrin & Flora, 2019) conversation orientation, conformity orientation, family cohesion, and conflict management work in urban Indonesian families with mental health issues, this topic improves family communication. This study demonstrated that family communication regulates emotions and otoritas and promotes psychological well-being in mental disease patients. The findings of this study can help families, counselors, and mental health professionals establish more empathic, dialogic, and adaptive communication tactics for Generation Z's emotional needs.

The study had four key findings. Generation Z's mental health rehabilitation benefits from family support and emotional relationships. Second, open and supportive family communication, especially from the mother figure, can reduce emotional stress and boost mental health bravery. Third, family authority and values are negotiated through discourse, and acquiescence is often employed to maintain family stability rather than as full agreement. Fourth, emotional regulation and delayed speech help psychologically vulnerable family members manage conflict.

These findings support Family Communication Patterns Theory's main assumption that the balance between conversation orientation and conformity orientation greatly affects family members' emotional relationships and mental health. These findings also show that relational theory and dialogic communication can explain Gen Z's need for autonomy and family value expectations in Indonesia's collectivist culture. Open family communication that is attentive to emotional regulation has been shown to improve Gen Z mental health.

In response to the research question, this study indicates that the pattern of family communication between parents and Generation Z in Bandung is dialogical but hierarchical, with mothers at the core of emotional openness. Mental health stigma, generational disparities, and family value demands are the most significant barriers to communication, while empathy, emotional validation, and communication flexibility serve as supportive elements. Furthermore, families adopt a conversational approach in daily communication through casual chats, decision-making negotiations, and the usage of digital media, which greatly aids in the coping process and emotional stabilization of Gen Z experiencing mental problems.

Suggestion

A. For Academic

To further comprehend family two-way communication, future studies should directly involve parents. Further research can employ a longitudinal approach to observe family communication patterns as Generation Z ages and mental health changes. Future research can analyze communication patterns by mental condition, socioeconomic background, and family structure. To integrate qualitative data depth with quantitative data generalization, mixed approaches are proposed.

B. For Practical

This study underlines the necessity of empathic, non-judgmental, open-minded communication for families, especially Generation Z parents. Parents must balance authority with emotional support and provide children a secure area to express themselves without judgment. This study can help mental health professionals design family-based

therapies that improve communication, emotional control, and conflict resolution. For mental health patients, involving all family members should boost social support and speed rehabilitation. This research emphasizes the need for culturally and generationally sensitive family-based mental health literacy programs in education and policy. Such initiatives can assist families comprehend Generation Z's mental health and improve family communication sustainably.

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