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Communication Patterns and Human Bonding in Long Distance Relationships between Parents and Children in Medan City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the communication pattern and relationship between parents and children (human bonding) in a long-distance relationship between parents and children in Medan. Attachment theory is used to explain the dynamics of relationships. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The research resource persons were six pairs of parents and children and two triangulators: a psychologist and a coordinator of adolescent resilience development National Population and Family Planning Board or Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana Nasional (BKKBN) North Sumatra Province. The results showed that human bonding communication in long-distance relationships between parents and children took place with limited communication intensity. Communication is dominated and controlled by parents. There are many restrictions on children, lack of support, limited freedom of expression, imbalances in communication, strict control, and authoritarian attitudes of parents. This leads to a lack of quality of relationship between parents and children. This condition occurs in the communication process that forms monopoly communication patterns (monopoly pattern communication) and unbalanced split communication patterns (unbalanced split pattern communication); the formation of human bonding in long-distance relationships between parents and children is based on emotional relationships. Communication techniques of parents to children tend to be coercive. The child must obey many things. Human bonding in a long-distance relationship creates a relationship that is not harmonious and makes children feel insecure (insecure attachment).

INTRODUCTION

Medan City is one of the community's choices, especially for high school graduates who want to continue their studies and move to higher education. Not only residents of Medan City but also community members in various city districts within the island of Sumatra and outside the island of Sumatra also make the city one of the options to continue their studies/studies to the undergraduate level at various universities in the city of Medan. In addition to the option to go to public universities, they also choose to study at private universities. Further studies in the city of Medan require young high school graduates to be temporarily separated physically from their parents. This physical distance has created long-distance relationships (long

distance relationships). In addition to living in relatives' places, they generally contract houses and boarding houses in the city of Medan. Even though parents are physically separated from children, communication between parents and children in long-distance relationships still occurs through mobile media. The intensity of this long-distance relationship is undoubtedly different from the intensity of close-distance relationships when children are in the same house with their parents. Interaction in a long-distance relationship is limited, and this limitation can affect the emotional bond and quality of the relationship between parent and child. Limited conditions require effective family communication.

Communication improves relationships with others (Evaluation, 2014). Communication also forms a close emotional bond (Soerjon, 2017). Maintaining family communication in a long-distance relationship requires self-disclosure and mutual trust to achieve harmonious family relationships (Kania et al., 2022). The family also influences the formation of the child's character and personality (Djamarah, 2020), (Suciati, 2015). Maintaining quality communication is challenging for parents and children when maintaining long-distance relationships. Time differences, technological constraints, and difficulty expressing their feelings and needs are part of shaping communication patterns in long-distance relationships between parents and children (Dharmawijati, 2015). A pattern is a fixed structure (Ngalimun, 2018). The pattern of an orderly and systematic order (Sidik & Sanusi, 2019). Communication patterns are models or designs of communication processes (Effendy, 2017). There are four common family communication patterns, namely the pattern of communication equality (Equality Pattern), balanced communication patterns (Balance Split Pattern), separate unbalanced communication patterns (Unbalanced Split Pattern), and monopoly communication patterns (Monopoly Pattern) (DeVito, 2013). Mutual trust and shared relationship goals determine nurturing and help feel close in a long-distance relationship (Amelia, 2020).

The long-distance relationship between parent and child becomes interesting because parent and child have emotional and inner closeness. This results in an emotional attachment between each other. A child always wants the presence of parents to be next to him, as a place to tell stories. The role of parents, which does not always exist because of long-distance relationships, can impact the function of parental supervision of children. This happens because supervision is done through a long-distance relationship. Children can freely move, mingle, and even find an escape to tell the story of life, replacing the figure of parents who live far away. There are communication obstacles in long-distance relationships between parents and children. (Son & Malau, 2020) It found that the lack of quality communication between parents and children in maintaining long-distance relationships was caused by factors such as busyness, distance, and

technology. Parents and children often have difficulty maintaining good and close communication, thus affecting the quality of their relationship. The same thing is stated: communication problems in a family occur due to limited time and busyness, technological limitations, differences in communication patterns, loneliness, and lack of social support (Sari & Fitri, 2018).

On the other hand, there can be a gap between the expectations and reality that parents and children experience when communicating in a long-distance relationship. Children expect parents to be able to play a dual role in their lives, both as teachers who become role models, as motivating figures, and as facilitators of all children's needs that are not met by parents (Mustafa et al., 2021). Even though the family plays a vital role in shaping the mindset and behavior of children for their future (Thankfully, 2023). The family is also a place where its members interact with each other and play specific social roles (Safrudin, 2015). Regarding communication, parents consider discussion and advising on effective forms of communication, but in reality, children tend to seek more dynamic and fun interactions. Communication problems between parents and children in long-distance relationships are also known from the North Sumatra Generation Planning Forum results. Until mid-2023, there are cases of seven students experiencing communication problems with their parents. The seven students live in Medan City and face long-distance relationships (long-distance relationships) with their parents (father and mother).

The problems they face are related to the disharmony of relationships with parents, where parents impose their will too much, lack of freedom for children to adapt to the environment, lack of attention, and lack of parental concern, which causes children to seek harmful vents such as bullying, unhealthy dating, and even becoming victims of sexual abuse. Departing from communication problems arising from these long-distance relationships, research on communication patterns and human bonding in long-distance relationships between parents and children in the city of Medan is an exciting and essential thing to be researched because, from the existing reality, every relationship between parents and children through communication in long-distance

relationships always causes problems which are generally in the form of disharmony between parents and children who are currently studying at several universities in the city of Medan.

These problems will be examined from the communication process that forms interpersonal communication patterns between parents and children and also explained what and how these communication patterns are formed so that they often cause problems in the relationship between parents and children and what factors affect the relationship (human bonding) between parents and children in long-distance relationships. The data obtained and explained in this study will be findings with novelty value in the form of causal factors that cause disharmony between parents and children in long-distance relationships. These findings are expected to clarify problems and facilitate the efforts of various related parties to prevent and overcome issues arising from the relationship between parents and children through communication in long-distance relationships. To explain the relationship between parents and children in long-distance relationships using attraction theory (attachment theory). Attraction theory explains attachment between a person and others, especially between children and parents. Bonding is a safe refuge to reduce grief and gain comfort (Cherniak et al., 2021). There are two forms of attachment in the relationship between children and parents: secure (secure) and insecure (insecure). Attachment theory states that the relationship between children and caregivers (parents) in childhood is significant because it affects children's emotional health, self-esteem, self-confidence, and social interaction skills in adolescence (Asprilia & Abidin, 2021). Attachment is formed through parents' support and closeness to their children (Ramdhana, 2021).

The research aims to analyze communication patterns and relationships between parents and children (human bonding) in long-distance relationships in the city of Medan which creates disharmony. The aim is carried out through tracing communication patterns that form interpersonal relationships in the scope of emotional support, involvement, and presence as well as attachment between parents and children. The aim is expected to produce practical insights for parents to create strong bonds of harmony.

METHODS

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach that aims to understand the phenomenon under study from the participants' perspective by collecting detailed and in-depth data on communication patterns, forming relationships between parents and children in long-distance relationships, and then interpreting the data. Qualitative research design can be an effective method easily understood by researchers and academics (Wahyudin, 2017).

This research type is called naturalistic inquiry or field study (Zuhri, 2021). Bogdan and Taylor (Wayan, 2018) state that the qualitative approach is a type of research that produces descriptive data in the form of speech or text of people and observed behavior. The research method used is the case study method (Action, 2021). This method uses a variety of data sources to systematically research, elaborate, and explain various aspects of an individual, group, program, organization, or event. Researchers can use in-depth interviews, participant observation, documentation, survey results, physical evidence, and more. (Evaluation, 2021) The case study method describes various aspects of an individual, a group, an organization (community), a program, or a social situation. The reason for choosing this case study method is because what is studied is a case of disharmonization of the relationship between parents and children through communication in long-distance relationships between parents and children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Pattern in Long-distance Relationships

Communication patterns are formed from activities carried out repeatedly and intensely between parents and children in long-distance relationships. Fitzpatrick said communication within families is based on specific patterns that determine how family members communicate with each other (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014). Hurlock said family communication shapes a child's character and behavior, Bahfiarti (2016). Communication can be used as a sign of trust and honesty by observing the emotional impact of relationships between family members (Published in 2017). According to the views of experts on family communication, communication is essential in building a

harmonious family. The establishment of good and effective communication will have an impact on harmonious relationships (Djamarah, 2020). Based on the interview results, it is known that communication between parents and children tends to be monotonous. In communicating, parents dominate and exercise strict control over children. It can be seen that parents only give orders and advice rather than open in-depth discussions with children, making children not open in communication. When communicating in a long-distance relationship, parents also show excessive curiosity about the child's life, including aspects of privacy, which makes the child feel burdened and deprived of personal space. This communication process leads to communication patterns. Unbalanced (Unbalanced split pattern). This communication pattern is characterized by one individual dominating and controlling half the communication area. In this pattern, the individual is considered more intelligent and tends to control communication and decision-making. Other individuals receive direction and opinions from the dominant individual, so communication is not balanced. In addition to leading to unbalanced communication patterns, communication between parents and children in long-distance relationships also leads to monopoly communication patterns (Monopoly pattern). This communication pattern occurs because one individual dominates and fully controls communication. Do not give other individuals feedback or participate. In the parent-child relationship, this pattern shows one parent becoming an authoritarian ruler because he rarely listens and even allows the child to speak. Communication becomes unbalanced and goes in the same direction. Previous research also found that communication messages exchanged in family communication between parents and children are generally dominated by parents (Hendra et al., 2021).

Researchers found difficulties in children in conveying their opinions, ideas, and needs to parents, which resulted in misunderstandings between the two parties, causing conflicts that made the relationship between parents and children unharmonious. There is also a lack of space for children to speak and express themselves, so children feel they are not heard and appreciated. Parents seem to tend to impose their will without

opening discussions with children in specific ways. Not considering children's wants, needs, and opinions makes children feel pressured and eliminates autonomy in making decisions, causing children to find it challenging to be confident and open up to their parents.

Formation of Human Bonding in Long-Distance Relationships

Human bonding, or the bond between humans in the family, is a process of knowing each other, caring for each other, loving each other, and depending on each other (Sarwono, 2016). Human bonding is essential in terms of the formation of the character of the child, developing patterns of thinking or an internal working model that is positive about himself, others, and the world around him (Eliasa, 2011). If human bonding indicates the existence of a bond, the person who has the bond may be in a different place. When they communicate, there is a long-distance relationship. Long-distance relationships or long-distance relationships occur when individuals are geographically separated by great distances, such as different cities, countries, or even continents (Fataraya, 2018). Several factors affect the continuity of a long-distance relationship, such as commitment to maintain relationships, an open attitude to always say what is, and trust in the form of loyalty and honesty of both parties (Amelia, 2020). Through interviews, researchers found several elements that influence human bonding between parents and inner child long-distance relationship between parents and children in Medan City, including:

1. Emotional Support

Emotional support becomes the dominant element that influences the formation of human bonding between parent and child. In the field, there is limited direct emotional support from parents regarding communication and recognition of children's interests and hobbies. Parents tend to focus on formal educational support while forbidding the child from pursuing his hobbies and interests. This causes the child to feel a lack of parental support and understanding of the child's interests and desires. Children feel limited in exploring their interests and desires. Children feel that their parents are uninterested and do not care about their stories and complaints. The emotional support needed by the child is not met. In addition,

children and mothers have a different understanding of each other's needs and expectations. Mothers tend to prohibit and not meet the needs of children, while children find it challenging to meet their needs.

This lack of emotional support is because parents feel it is less critical. Parents seem to be more focused on how children can complete their studies on time. There are differences in understanding and expectations, imbalances in roles and responsibilities, and mismatches between desires and boundaries. These factors can cause a lack of emotional support and difficulty meeting the child's and the parent's needs. Other informants received statements of emotional support from parents through affection, sharing stories and experiences, and sadness and joy. The emotional support of parents for children is essential. Kurniawati, in her research, stated that emotional support from parents and family is the main driver for children's success in achieving achievements. This research confirms that the critical role of parents and families as supporting parties is very influential in encouraging and motivating children to provide the best things for themselves and their lives (Kurniastuti et al., 2019).

An interview with one of the informants stated that he did not feel the presence and emotional support of the parents. This is because children are less close to their parents, even when telling stories and complaining; parents seem less interested and even reasonably ignorant, resulting in children feeling that they do not get emotional support. Parents seem to impose their will, do not care, and lack attention to their children's lives. Parents seem to be only selfish. Emotional support provided by parents has a vital role in shaping children's confidence and achievement so that a healthy and harmonious relationship between parents and children is built. Children are better prepared to face challenges and problems independently with the emotional support provided. He dares to make decisions and take responsibility for his actions. Indeed, this has a positive influence on children's achievement.

This is in line with research conducted by (Kurniastuti et al., 2019), which states that emotional support from parents and family is the main driver for children's success in achieving achievements. This research confirms that the

critical role of parents and families as supporting parties is very influential in encouraging and motivating children to provide the best things for themselves and their lives. Psychologist informants provide views related to the emotional support that can be applied in the form of empathy by giving attention to children, presenting a sense of comfort to children, calming children when they have problems, making children feel loved so that they can avoid stress, and being responsive when children need the presence of parents both in giving advice and encouragement and so on.

The same thing was also conveyed by the coordinator of youth resilience development at National Population and Family Planning Board or National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN) North Sumatra Province, who said that listening to children's feelings and thoughts with empathy can strengthen the emotional bond between the two. Parents can discuss challenges and problems faced by children so that children feel supported and understood. Sharing stories about your parents' experiences and your child's experiences can also be an effective way to strengthen your emotional connection. In building attachments to strengthen relationships, individuals in long-distance relationship conditions must provide attention and trust (Chiisai & Mumpuni, 2021).

2. Engagement and Presence

Researchers found that the presence and involvement of parents in children's activities had a diverse influence. Through interviews with informants, it was found that parents' incomprehension of involvement, presence, and communication influenced children's activities. Of course, this is a problem point in the relationship between parents and children. This incomprehension makes communication between parents and children less effective or limited; children have difficulty conveying their wants, challenges, or needs to their parents. This can hinder open conversation and result in a lack of understanding between parent and child about each other's needs and expectations. The presence and involvement of parents is also not as expected; parents do not give an excellent response to children, do not attach importance to the existence of children, and do not even show a caring attitude towards children's activities. Regarding

involvement and attendance, children need parents to be good and active listeners. Because parents are a home for children to pour out all their complaints, both sadness and happiness, parents' empathy for children and vice versa must be reflected in emotional communication. Parents need to listen attentively, try to understand the child's feelings and perspectives, and show that they care and pay attention, provide support, and are involved in every child's activity.

3. Attachment

Parental attachment to children is an integral part of everyone's life. In attachment theory, children must feel protected by their caregiver figures, especially parents. A strong attachment to parents gives children confidence and security when interacting socially with the world around them (Ikrima & Khoirunnisa, 2021). In attachment theory, there are two forms of attachment in the relationship between children and parents, namely secure attachment (secure attachment) and insecure attachment (insecure attachment) (Appleyard et al., 2007). Secure attachment (secure attachment) is formed when the child feels comfortable and confident that parents will provide support and protection so that the child feels safe exploring the world around him. Responsive and in-depth parental communication is vital in forming a secure attachment (Abdulfattah & Badawood, 2017). Conversely, limited and in-depth communication can lead to the formation of an uncomfortable attachment (insecure attachment). Children feel inadequately appreciated or heard, so they feel uncomfortable or anxious when interacting with others. This can affect children's emotional and behavioral development (Andayu et al., 2019). Regarding attachment (attachment), only six family informants showed a secure attachment pattern between parent and child. Parents often provide advice and support. Although sometimes parents experience levels of anxiety and pessimism, they still teach the value of simplicity. This suggests that parents show high responsiveness to the emotional needs of informants and provide adequate support. Parents and children often talk and share stories about difficulties and happiness in life. Parents also share their life experiences and advise informants. This demonstrates open and transparent communication between parent and child, which helps strengthen secure attachment.

Other data obtained through interviews with resource persons from all five families point to insecure attachment characterized by children feeling less appreciated and less emotionally supported, making it difficult for children to open up and share feelings with parents. Minimal involvement and attendance, inappropriate responses, and imbalances of roles and responsibilities also contribute to the emergence of insecure attachment. Insecure attachment or insecure attachment patterns in individuals are divided into three types, namely ambivalent/anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and disorganized or disoriented attachment (Runtiko, 2022).

Factors Influencing Communication and Human Bonding Patterns

Factors affecting communication patterns and human bonding in long-distance relationships could be communication intensity, communication techniques, and communication media (Melinda, L and Wahyuni, 2019). Based on the results of the analysis of data in the field, it can be stated that communication patterns built through long-distance relationships can be categorized as minimal, not only in frequency but also the duration of communication and time or schedule that is the habit of informants communicating. The interview results showed that the informant's communication was only about five and a maximum of 10 minutes. Only one informant mentioned the length of time he communicated with his parents, which was 20 to 30 minutes.

The time the informants communicated was uncertain, but generally, at night, the rest time, usually after maghrib prayers, was until 10 pm. There is limited communication between parents and children in long-distance relationships in Medan. Limited and short communication is caused by the lack of openness between parents and children; unconsciously, parents and children consider this communication limitation standard and have become a habit; communication is interpreted as a formality only. Left alone can create an emotional bond between children and parents. Not enough interaction can make them feel disconnected and less emotionally supported. This little communication is also feared to affect communication quality, so children do not feel close to their parents. In long-distance relationships, communication media become a vital means for

parents and children to interact and maintain their involvement. Media such as telephone, video calls, text messages, or other social media platforms can be used by parents and children to communicate directly, share experiences, and convey feelings to each other. Communication media become a bridge that allows children and parents to connect emotionally, even though they are not in one place physically.

As the primary means of maintaining long-distance interaction, communication media also play an essential role in shaping human bonding between parents and children. Using communication media wisely can strengthen family ties, exchange information, send photos and videos, and share special moments, increasing feelings of family bonding (Tadpatrikar et al., 2021). Communication media commonly used in long-distance relationships between parents and children include WhatsApp telephone, text messages (SMS), and video calls via WhatsApp. Some children rely on younger siblings or family members to communicate via video calls, while others use regular phones or text messages more often. In the use of communication media in long-distance relationships between parents and children, several obstacles affect communication. One of them is the presence of signal problems or poor networks, which can cause call breakage or impaired voice and video quality. Another obstacle that can be experienced is the limited internet package, which limits the time and frequency of communication. In addition, there are also obstacles caused by a lack of proficiency in using mobile phones, especially in parents who may not be used to or are not too familiar with using the device. Obstacles often experienced in the use of communication media in long-distance relationships between parents and children include the constraints of internet packages that run out of limited network constraints, especially in rural areas.

This is in line with research (Dharmawan & Dhona, 2022), which states that poor network quality is the main inhibiting factor affecting communication patterns. Differences in understanding, difficulty in understanding what is conveyed by one party, and obstacles due to lack of proficiency in using mobile phones require help from others to make calls or video calls. In line with research (Luxyantika, 2014), the limited ability to

master media impedes long-distance relationships between children and parents. Using modern communication technology makes it difficult for children to communicate optimally with parents.

Based on the researcher's analysis, differences in understanding and proficiency in communication media also influence communication patterns and the formation of human bonding between parents and children. Some parents are unfamiliar or less savvy about modern communication technologies such as video calls or text messages. This can complicate communication and affect the depth and quality of interaction between parent and child. Psychologists and triangulator informants explain the constraints and challenges parents and children face in long-distance relationships. The challenge is time and media communication. To overcome these challenges, children and parents must agree. Regarding communication time, for example, a comfortable agreement can be made to communicate when, if children or parents experience busyness, it is not a problem not to communicate as long as everything is communicated. An explanation is conveyed, and it is mentioned that communication media should return to technical; the point is that if there are obstacles, there is no need to worry or panic between the two. The results also found that children and parents use informative communication techniques in exchanging news and information about happy or sad events in the family or relatives. Children receive such information from parents, especially during family events, marriage, health, or death. In this context, the communication technique used is informative, where parents provide information clearly and objectively to the child regarding the events. In other interviews, it was seen that there were problems in communication techniques between children and parents.

This problem occurs because of an imbalance between prohibitions and restrictions given by parents but not followed by meeting the needs of children. As a result, children feel restricted and excessively supervised by parents. This situation can generate emotional tension and dissatisfaction in children, potentially damaging the harmonious relationship between them. The problem of communication techniques can be seen as the imbalance between prohibitions and restrictions

provided by parents to support or fulfill children's needs. It is seen that the dominant communication technique in this context is coercive, where parents use pressure or prohibition against the child. This causes a child's dissatisfaction with the parents' attitude, which ultimately affects the relationship between the two. Less supportive communication techniques are also a problem affecting communication patterns and the formation of human bonding between parents and children. Based on the interview results, the main problem was the existence of coercive communication techniques used by some parents. This coercive communication technique includes the use of coercion, prohibition, emotional manipulation, or pressure to get the child to do something that the parent wants without leaving room for the child to give opinions or decisions. This can be seen from the informant's statement, which revealed that some parents limit children's freedom in making decisions or even apply restrictions that hinder the child's development and independence. This results in the child feeling burdened and unappreciated as an individual with his views and decisions. Children feel uncomfortable and tend to close themselves when communicating with their parents. As a result, the emotional bond between parent and child can weaken. Another result was excessive restriction and supervision from parents on children, so children felt constrained and unable to communicate.

Based on the results of the analysis related to factors that influence communication patterns and the formation of human bonding between parents and children, the low intensity of communication is the main problem faced. The infrequent frequency of communication leads to a lack of interaction and emotional involvement between parent and child. In addition, the limited duration of communication also contributes to the lack of depth in the interaction. Communication media constraints also exacerbate this situation. Technical problems such as poor signal or network and limited internet packages disrupt communication and reduce the quality of interaction between parents and children.

CONCLUSION

Based on research data, it is assumed that almost all parents, as resource persons in this study, expect their children studying in Medan to focus on

studying so they can complete their studies on time. However, most parents ignore several factors in emotional support, involvement and presence, empathy, affection and attention, and attachment, which is crucial in maintaining the continuity of the relationship (human bonding) between parents and children.

Some children's activities related to channeling interests, talents, hobbies, and other activities for self-development receive less attention from their parents. Not only that, the substantial expectations of parents so that children focus on learning and avoid less practical activities have affected the intensity, process, content of messages, and communication techniques built by parents in long-distance relationships with children. Communication that is built is more dominated by parents to form an unbalanced split pattern. In addition, various commands and prohibitions color the content of the communication message of parents with children.

Finally, it also forms a monopoly communication pattern between parents and children in long-distance relationships. Both interpersonal communication patterns of parents with children impact decreasing the quality of the relationship between parents and children (human bonding). The creation of insecure attachment accompanies this decrease in the relationship quality.

In a long-distance relationship with his parents. Therefore, human bonding between parents and children needs to be strengthened through a series of actions involving emotional support, empathy, affection, and children's attention. This includes respecting the boundaries of a child's privacy by respecting and respecting necessary personal space. Thus, a deep emotional bond can grow strong and sustainable between parent and child to create a solid connection in every interaction and situation. Parents need to increase attention and support for the positive and productive potential in children, where the potential will support the success of children in completing their studies.

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