RESEARCH ARTICLE

LITERATURE STUDY: FAMILY INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal communication within the family is a key factor influencing children's mental health, as through daily interactions, children learn to manage emotions, shape behaviors, and develop psychological resilience. This study aims to comprehensively review the relationship between family interpersonal communication and children's mental health through a literature study approach. The method used is library research by examining books, articles, and national as well as international scientific journals relevant to the topics of family communication and children's psychological well-being. The findings indicate that positive interpersonal communication quality, characterized by self-disclosure, feedback, and shared meaning, significantly contributes to enhancing children's psychological well-being. Empathic, supportive, and emotionally validating communication strengthens secure attachment, self-confidence, emotional regulation, and resilience against stress and social pressure. Conversely, closed, authoritarian, or unempathetic communication increases the risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and dysfunctional behavior. Therefore, healthy interpersonal communication within the family serves as a fundamental foundation for developing children's mental health and overall well-being in the future.

Keywords: Family; Interpersonal Communication; Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication within the family is one of the key factors influencing the development of children's mental health, as daily interactions between parents and children can shape their emotions, behaviors, and psychological resilience. In the modern era, this issue has become increasingly relevant due to rising external pressures such as the pandemic and social changes that affect family dynamics. According to secondary data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), about 1 in 7 children and adolescents aged 10–19 worldwide experience mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, with higher prevalence in developing countries due to environmental and family factors. This condition not only affects children's academic and social performance but also impacts the overall quality of family life.

The family serves as the primary environment where children learn to understand themselves and the social world. Interpersonal communication within the family, especially between parents and children, functions as the main medium for instilling values, emotions, and coping strategies in facing life's pressures (Zapf et al., 2023). Based on research conducted by Huang et al. (2023), poor family communication is associated with increased anxiety and depression, and the effects are mediated by domestic violence and problematic internet use. On the other hand, open, empathetic, and accepting communication has been proven to strengthen children's psychological security. In Indonesia, Suryani and Widodo (2021) emphasized the role of culture in shaping family

communication, where collective values can strengthen children's mental health if implemented properly.

International research indicates that family communication quality is negatively correlated with children's levels of depression and anxiety (Somers et al., 2024). Conversely, supportive communication and emotional validation contribute to improved self-esteem and emotional regulation (Wecht et al., 2024). Research conducted by Li et al. (2024) confirms that parenting style and children's resilience also act as important mediators in the relationship between family communication and mental health. Open and supportive communication enhances children's ability to cope with stress, strengthens resilience, and reduces problematic behaviors. Findings by Gao et al. (2024) show that the quality of parent–child communication predicts parental anxiety regarding education and also increases parent–child trust. Better communication quality is associated with higher trust and lower parental anxiety. Another study by Dai et al. (2024) found that "phubbing" behavior (parents ignoring children due to digital devices) is related to decreased adolescent self-esteem and an increased risk of problematic internet use; self-esteem serves as a mediator. Therefore, the quality of parental presence and communication (not merely frequency) is crucial for children's mental health.

In the Indonesian context, research on family communication and children's mental health shows consistent findings. Astuti et al. (2024) found that open communication patterns within the family can reduce stress risk and enhance adolescents' emotional well-being. Djayadin and Munastiwi (2020) also found that 13 out of 14 families considered mental health to play an important role for children as it forms the basis for emotional development, influencing their thinking, communication, and psychological resilience. Anggelica and Siahaan (2021) found that 34 out of 72 respondents reported having good family communication, indicating that the foundation of mental health in many families remains weak. This condition may pose a threat to future mental health if communication patterns are not improved early, as it can become the root of various psychological problems. Based on this background, this study is important to explore the relationship between family interpersonal communication and children's

mental health by integrating recent findings to provide practical insights and intervention recommendations.

METHOD

The method used in this study is the library research method. A literature study is a data collection methodology carried out by reviewing books, essays, notes, and related reports after identifying and defining the research problem (Nazir, 2013). The study of writing is also linked to hypothetical studies and other references related to the values, culture, and norms that develop within the researched social context. Moreover, library research plays a crucial role in coordinating investigations, as research cannot be separated from scientific literature. According to Sugiyono (2013), data are obtained from information relevant to the problem being analyzed by focusing on other written sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous experts' works. The author of this study employs the literature study approach by reviewing various printed and electronic journals, documents, reference books, related research, and other supporting data source.

DISCUSSION

Interpersonal communication within the family plays a fundamental role in shaping and maintaining children's mental health. As the smallest social unit, the family is the first place where children learn to interact, understand emotions, and model communication patterns from their parents (Zapf et al., 2023). The quality of communication within the family reflects the child's psychological dynamics; open and empathetic communication strengthens emotional attachment, while closed and pressured communication can become a source of psychological stress. This is consistent with the findings of Huang et al. (2023), which show that poor communication patterns in families are associated with an increased risk of anxiety and depression in children, especially when accompanied by conflict or verbal violence at home. Therefore, interpersonal communication not only serves as a tool for conveying messages but also as an emotional mechanism that supports children's psychological well-being.

In this context, interpersonal communication theory explains that message exchange between individuals involves emotional, social, and cognitive components that construct shared meaning (Berger, 2025). Interpersonal communication within the family emphasizes three essential aspects: self-disclosure, feedback, and shared meaning. First, **self-disclosure** refers to the ability of parents and children to share thoughts, experiences, and feelings honestly and proportionally. This openness helps children feel valued, accepted, and understood, contributing to psychological safety and higher self-esteem. Second, **feedback** is the response given to a message. Positive feedback, such as emotional validation ("Mom knows you're sad, and that's okay"), helps children recognize and regulate their emotions healthily. Lloyd et al. (2023) emphasized that emotional responsiveness in family interactions reduces stress levels and enhances children's subjective well-being. Third, shared meaning refers to the mutual understanding between parents and children in interpreting situations. Through consistent and empathetic communication, families can build shared values, expectations, and goals that strengthen emotional cohesion and mental stability.

In addition to these three main components, effective interpersonal communication is also influenced by positive behavioral aspects as proposed by Xie et al. (2021), namely care, clarity, credibility, confirmation, and active listening. Within the family environment, when parents show care and listen to their children without judgment, children feel accepted and safe to express themselves. This pattern fosters secure attachment, which serves as a crucial foundation for healthy mental development. Conversely, authoritarian, pressured, or unempathetic communication can cause children to withdraw and develop dysfunctional coping mechanisms, such as social withdrawal or aggressive emotional expression (Somers et al., 2024).

Effective communication also serves multiple functions in the context of child development. According to Effendy (in Anggelica & Siahaan, 2021), communication functions to inform, educate, entertain, and influence. Within the family, these four functions play a major role in shaping children's character and emotional balance. When parents convey information clearly and educate with empathy, children learn to internalize positive values such as responsibility, compassion, and honesty. Entertaining communication, such as healthy humor, can ease emotional tension and enhance positive relationships among family members. Meanwhile, the influencing function through constructive communication helps children adjust their behavior according to social norms without experiencing excessive psychological pressure.

Children's mental health, as described by Putri et al. (2022), encompasses the balance of biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects. Family interpersonal communication directly affects the socio-emotional dimension, where children learn to recognize, express, and regulate their emotions through interactions with their parents. In the cognitive aspect, open communication helps children develop reflective and empathetic thinking abilities. Biologically, affectionate communication creates a safe environment that physiologically reduces stress hormone levels such as cortisol. The study by Wecht et al. (2024) revealed that children living in families with supportive communication have lower anxiety levels and better emotional regulation abilities than those from families characterized by negative or conflictual communication.

Thus, healthy family interpersonal communication not only fosters relational harmony but also serves as the primary foundation for children's mental health development. Open, empathetic, and responsive interactions allow children to grow with a sense of security, positive self-esteem, and adaptive social abilities. Conversely, poor communication patterns can become risk factors for mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, or aggressive behavior in the future. Therefore, strengthening the quality of interpersonal communication within families should be a preventive strategy in promoting children's mental health in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Interpersonal communication within the family plays a very important role in shaping and maintaining a child's mental health. Through daily interactions between parents and children,

emotional, social, and moral values are instilled and form the foundation for healthy psychological development. Open, empathetic, and supportive communication allows children to feel accepted, appreciated, and have a safe space to express themselves. Conversely, closed, pressuring communication that lacks emotional validation can lead to feelings of alienation, anxiety, and even long-term mental disorders.

The three main components of interpersonal communication are self-disclosure, feedback, and shared meaning. Each has a significant role in building emotional closeness and mutual understanding between parents and children. Self-disclosure enables the development of trust, feedback supports emotional regulation, and shared meaning strengthens mutual understanding within the family. In addition, other aspects such as care, clarity, credibility, confirmation, and active listening also enrich the quality of interpersonal relationships in the family environment.

Children's mental health develops optimally when family communication patterns are positive and mutually supportive. This has implications for increasing self-esteem, emotional regulation abilities, and children's resilience in facing life pressures. On the other hand, poor communication can be a risk factor for the emergence of stress, depression, and behavioral disorders. Thus, building healthy interpersonal communication within the family is not only a relational need but also an effective preventive strategy to maintain children's psychological well-being.

Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of family communication need to become a priority in educational interventions, family counseling, and social policies in Indonesia. Through education in empathetic communication and training in active listening skills for parents, it is expected that families can become safe, warm, and supportive environments for the holistic growth and development of children, namely emotionally, cognitively, and socially.

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