

Family communication patterns between children and parents residing at Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta nursing home

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Abstract

The growing population of elderly individuals in urban areas, such as Yogyakarta, has raised concerns regarding the emotional well-being of aging residents, particularly in relation to their communication with family members. As family interactions often diminish in frequency and depth, the emotional support provided to elderly parents may be affected. This study investigates the communication patterns between children and elderly parents residing at Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta nursing home. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews and validated via triangulation methods. The analysis followed a systematic process of data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal three distinct communication patterns based on Fitzpatrick's typology: consensual, protective, and laissez-faire. Subject SS exemplifies a consensual pattern, characterized by open and meaningful conversations that promote emotional closeness. Subject SW reflects a protective pattern, engaging in surface-level discussions to prevent causing concern for her children, which results in limited emotional depth. Subject KS demonstrates a laissez-faire pattern, with infrequent and superficial interactions, leading to emotional detachment and loneliness. The study emphasizes the need for enhancing communication quality and frequency to strengthen emotional bonds and improve the overall well-being of elderly individuals.

Keywords

Family communication, Elderly parents, Nursing home, Fitzpatrick's typology

Introduction

The issue of elderly care has become a significant concern in many parts of the world, especially as the elderly population continues to increase [1]. In urban areas like Yogyakarta, Indonesia, this challenge becomes more complex due to the rising separation of families caused by migration for work or educational purposes. Many elderly individuals are placed in nursing homes, such as Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta, due to this physical and emotional distance. While these institutions provide essential care

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and support, the emotional well-being of elderly residents is often overlooked. One important aspect of this issue is the change in family communication patterns, which can have a significant impact on the emotional state of elderly individuals in nursing homes. When interactions between children and their elderly parents decrease, feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and isolation can intensify. Understanding how these communication dynamics affect the psychological health of the elderly is crucial to improving elderly care practices and ensuring the emotional well-being of residents. While attention to physical care for the elderly has grown, the impact of family communication patterns remains underexplored in existing research.

Previous studies on elderly care have mostly focused on institutional aspects, such as the quality of nursing home facilities and the physical health of elderly residents. Experts such as [2], [3] have explored social and cultural factors influencing elderly care decisions. These studies often emphasize the importance of family involvement; however, there is still a gap in understanding how specific communication patterns between parents and children affect the emotional well-being of the elderly in nursing homes. Fitzpatrick's (2002) family communication typology, which includes consensual, protective, and laissez-faire communication patterns, offers a useful framework for examining how these dynamics may emerge in the context of elderly care. However, this area of research has not been fully explored. By focusing on communication patterns, this study aims to fill this gap and explore the emotional impact of family interactions in nursing homes such as Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta.

Although research on elderly care already exists, many aspects remain unexplored regarding the emotional impact of family communication patterns on elderly individuals in nursing homes. While previous studies have looked at the role of family support in elderly care, few have delved into how different communication styles between the elderly and their children can influence their emotional health. The impact of the frequency, style, and quality of communication on the emotional state of elderly residents in nursing homes is still an underexplored area of research. This study fills that gap by focusing on the specific communication dynamics between elderly residents at Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta and their children. By considering how family members communicate with their elderly parents and exploring the emotional impact of these interactions, this research will provide new perspectives in the field of elderly care. The study will reveal subtle ways in which family communication can enhance or harm the emotional well-being of elderly individuals in institutional care.

This study aims to investigate how different family communication patterns affect the emotional well-being of elderly residents in nursing homes, with a particular focus on Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta. By applying Fitzpatrick's family communication typology, this research will explore the influence of consensual, protective, and laissez-faire communication patterns on the experiences of elderly residents at Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews with elderly residents and their children, this study will uncover the impact of these communication

styles on the psychological health of the elderly. The goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how parent-child communication dynamics can affect the emotional well-being of elderly individuals in nursing homes. This research will contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of elderly care by offering insights into the important role of family communication and providing practical recommendations for improving communication strategies in nursing homes like Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta. By addressing the emotional needs of the elderly through better communication practices, this study aims to create a more supportive environment that promotes their psychological and emotional health.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach, which produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from individuals and observable behaviors. The focus of this research is on the family communication patterns between children and parents residing at Tresna Wreda Yogyakarta Nursing Home. For data collection, this study employs observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques. Observations will be conducted on interactions between children and parents within the nursing home, while interviews will be carried out with both the children and the parents. Additionally, documentation will be gathered from nursing home records, as well as relevant media or reports regarding family communication. Data analysis follows the steps outlined by [4], which include organizing and preparing the data, reducing and categorizing the data into meaningful themes, presenting the data in the form of graphs, tables, or descriptive discussions, and interpreting the data to draw conclusions. To ensure data validity, source triangulation will be used by cross-checking data from various sources to ensure its consistency.

Results and Discussion

The data obtained from this study was then discussed into three types of family communication patterns (Table 1). Below is the discussion of the findings in this research.

Table 1. Family Communication Pattern

Sub-Topic	Family Communication Pattern		
	Consensual	Protective	Laissez-Faire
	SS- SS's Children	SW- SW's Children	KS- KS's Children
Communication Intensity Between Children and Parents Before Moving to the Nursing Home	SS and her children had a close relationship before moving to the nursing home, sharing stories every night. Although communication decreased after the children started working, they maintained their closeness by talking in the morning.	Before moving to the nursing home, SW rarely communicated with her children, with visits limited to every two weeks.	KS had minimal communication with her children before moving to the nursing home. Her two children in Jakarta rarely contacted her, while the child in Semarang called once a week.

Sub-Topic	Family Communication Pattern		
	Consensual	Protective	Laissez-Faire
	SS- SS's Children	SW- SW's Children	KS- KS's Children
Communication Intensity Between Children and Parents After Moving to the Nursing Home	SS maintains good communication with her children despite the distance. Her son calls 3-4 times a week, and her daughter calls 2-3 times a week, including connecting SS with her grandchildren. They also call every night to keep the family bond warm.	After moving to the nursing home, SW feels that communication with her children has become more infrequent, receiving calls once a week and occasionally talking to her grandchildren. SW's children admit that their busy schedules limit communication, with calls happening once a week or every two weeks.	KS only receives calls once a month from her child in Semarang, while her children in Jakarta never contact her. KS's children admit that their busy schedules limit communication.
Content of Communication	SS and her children often discuss various topics, strengthening their bond, with SS's children feeling supported by their mother's wise advice, even in difficult situations.	SW always updates her children about her activities and health condition in the nursing home, while her children try to cheer her up with funny stories, although they don't often discuss deep matters.	KS and her children only talk about daily activities because they rarely meet, feeling awkward, and they don't discuss deep topics.
Frequency of Initiative in Communication	SS maintains good communication with her children despite the distance. Her son calls 3-4 times a week, her daughter calls 2-3 times a week, and they connect SS with her grandchildren. SS's children also call every night, maintaining a warm and supportive family relationship.	SW more frequently contacts her children to update them on her health and show her care. SW's children feel happy and encouraged when she calls, as it shows her attention and closeness despite the separation.	KS more frequently contacts her children to update them on her health and show her care, although their conversations tend to be light. KS's children admit that it's often their mother who calls, but they feel the conversation lacks depth and is sometimes awkward.
Changes in Communication Style After Moving to the Nursing Home	SS feels that although the frequency of communication with her children has decreased, the quality of their communication remains strong. They still feel close, even if they don't speak every day, and her children are still open and attentive when they call.	SW feels that conversations with her children have become more awkward, as she doesn't want to worry them. SW's children also notice the change, feeling awkward and less relaxed compared to before, making conversations feel more stiff.	KS feels that communication with her children has become more rare and distant since moving to the nursing home, worsening the already limited communication they had before. KS's children also feel there is distance in their communication, which now happens very rarely.
Emotional Support Through Communication During the	SS feels highly valued and supported by her children, which makes her happy and not feel lonely in the nursing home. SS's	SW feels that she does not receive enough emotional support from her children due to their busy schedules and the	KS feels that she lacks emotional support from her children, although they try to contact her. Their conversations feel

Sub-Topic	Family Communication Pattern		
	Consensual	Protective	Laissez-Faire
	SS- SS's Children	SW- SW's Children	KS- KS's Children
Time in the Nursing Home	children make sure she feels cared for and loved, understanding the importance of communication for her well-being.	shallow nature of their communication. SW's children also find it difficult to provide full emotional support because their time for conversation is limited.	shallow and lack depth. KS's children also admit that their busy schedules limit the conversation and do not provide the emotional attention that their mother needs.

Source: Interview results with informants, July 2024

Consensual

The consensual communication pattern focuses on openness and high intensity in interactions. Family members actively share opinions to reach a consensus, making the relationship more harmonious and full of understanding. In SS's relationship with her children, this pattern is reflected in their efforts to maintain intensive communication despite the distance. The frequency of phone calls made by SS's children, 3-4 times a week, shows their commitment to staying emotionally connected. This reflects that communication is not just a tool for exchanging information but also a means of strengthening family bonds. More than just frequency, the quality of the conversations also shows the consensual pattern in SS's relationship with her children. They share stories about their lives, including bringing the grandchildren into the conversation through calls. These deep communications indicate strong emotional support, with SS feeling valued and cared for by her children. This pattern helps SS stay connected and not feel lonely, even while living in the nursing home.

According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick, the consensual communication pattern has a high orientation to conversation and conformity, creating a balance between open communication and respect for family values [5]. Families with this pattern tend to give children space to express opinions while maintaining parental authority in decision-making [6]. This pattern strengthens emotional relationships and creates a sense of safety, confidence, and harmonious attachment among family members [7].

Protective

The protective communication pattern tends to focus on hierarchy within the family, with conversations being more directed and one-way. In SW's relationship with her children, this pattern is seen in SW's initiative to frequently call her children to discuss her health. SW shows care by regularly updating her children, but the conversations are more informational rather than deep. This shows that while there is an effort to maintain the relationship, the communication does not strengthen emotional closeness. On the other hand, SW's children rarely take the initiative to contact their mother, which further strengthens the protective element in their relationship. When SW starts the conversation, the interaction tends to be short and rarely touches on deeper issues. This pattern reflects a relationship that still has basic care but lacks open dialogue, making

communication feel rigid and formal. This shows that while there is care, the quality of communication is not enough to create strong closeness between SW and her children.

In this pattern, parents more often take the initiative to give updates or advice, while children are usually more passive in communication [8]. This protective communication pattern often results in communication that is informational but emotionally shallow [9]. This pattern describes a relationship that still shows care, but is limited to communication that is less open and shallow, which can hinder emotional closeness between parents and children [10].

Laissez-faire

The laissez-faire communication pattern is characterized by low intensity and depth of interaction [11]. KS's relationship with her children reflects this pattern, where communication is very rare, both before and after KS moved to the nursing home. Before moving to the nursing home, communication occurred only once every few weeks from her child in Semarang, while the children in Jakarta almost never contacted her. When conversations did occur, they often felt shallow and awkward. This pattern indicates a lack of effort to maintain a close relationship. After KS moved to the nursing home, the intensity of communication with her children further declined, with no contact at all from two of her children in Jakarta. This pattern not only worsened the emotional distance between KS and her children but also made KS feel increasingly lonely and unsupported emotionally. The minimal interaction is a clear reflection of the laissez-faire pattern, where family relationships are neglected due to the lack of initiative to communicate and build emotional closeness [12]. The lack of interaction reflects the laissez-faire pattern, where family relationships tend to be neglected due to minimal initiative to communicate and build emotional closeness [13].

Conclusion

Communication patterns in families, especially in situations involving physical distance or life changes, significantly affect emotional closeness. The consensual pattern, as seen with SS, fosters warmth through frequent and open communication, while the protective pattern in SW shows care but lacks depth. In contrast, KS's laissez-faire pattern results in minimal interaction, creating emotional distance. Key factors influencing these patterns include physical distance, life changes, time constraints, emotional support needs, and cultural norms. Open and quality communication is essential for maintaining a supportive and harmonious family relationship.

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