Keeping A Harmonious Relationship With Elderly Family Members Who Are Not Living Together Through Communication

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Abstract: Communication is an essential thing in human life and must be maintained effectiveness. Communication signifies the harmonious family life. Especially in taking care of the elderly. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship of elderly harmony through communication without the presence of one of the members who are not at home. This stud uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. Research informants are 5 elderly in Jakarta whose family members are not at home. The data collection consists of interviewing, observation, and documentation. Data analysis techniques comprise of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification withdrawal. The results showed that communication carried out smoothly despite the busyness of work or taking care of children and the willingness of a good time. The important communication aspects are time and togetherness in the family, a side of listening and honesty.

Key Words: Family communication; Elderly; harmonious relationship

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of exchanging messages, opinions, information, or wishes with one or more people. In a family, communication becomes an important factor to avoid misunderstandings in the family. In general, communication between family members has always been considered as the main aspect of interpersonal relationships to realize the dynamics affected by family relationships (Zarnaghash et al., 2013).

Communication in a family is a unique and distinctive with each other members. It will certainly involve at least two or more people who have characteristics, values, opinions, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that are distinctive and different (Rahmah, 2018). If a family already has good communication at the beginning, then the relationships that occur in the family will be so harmonious (Ginting, 2013). Harmonization is commonly refers human value involving socialization in feelings, actions, relationships, opinions, and interests (Komjakraphan & Chansawang, 2016). According to Gunarsa (2000), achieve a harmonious family, some aspects must be achieved such as love between families, mutual understanding of family members, dialogue or effective communication being established in the family, and having time together and cooperation in the family.

The elderly have difficulty carrying out their activities and need help and support from others. This is due to the occurrence of aging, decline, and deterioration of limb function so that it greatly affects the behavior of the elderly in life (Iswanti et al., 2012). Elderly people with this condition need physical and psychological assistance from people around them, especially posterity, to continue living their lives. Previously the elderly were independent in carrying out their daily activities, no need to be helped by others (Güven & Şener, 2010). Moreover, the elderly’s children have already grown up, and they have their own lives and work, changing their scared responsibility to look after their parents (Jafar et al., 2011). Of course, the responsibility of taking care of their parents is handed over by leaving their parents to a wardha home or other family member's house. This condition makes the elderly feel abandoned, they can not communicate regularly. Communication is important to avoid breaking the bond between the elderly and the child. Good communication includes providing enough time, listening, and practicing honesty (Gunarsa, 2012). The elderly need to get the full support of their own family to realize harmonious relationships between families (Güven & Şener, 2010) through communication.

METHOD

The research informant numbered 5 elderly as primary informants and 5 family members as secondary informants. The primary informant of the study was elderly who was registered with the foundation but did not live in the foundation, they lived in a house where one of the family members did not live with the elderly. Secondary research informants are families that do not live with primary informants. This is the following of the research informant's code.
Table 1 Coding of Research Informants

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<tr>
<th>Coding</th>
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<td>Code for Interview Order</td>
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<td>L1</td>
<td>Main Informant 1</td>
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<td>Secondary Informant 4</td>
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<td>AL5</td>
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The research uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. Research procedures are carried out in 3 stages: pre-field, fieldwork, and data analysis (Moleong, 2017). In the pre-field stage, a literature search was conducted related to the problems of elderly life, meeting with the foundation to inform the purpose of research at the place. At the field work stage researchers conduct interviews with informants in the elderly home (secondary informant) and in the foundation (primary informant). At the data analysis stage, researchers collect the results of interviews by conducting stages such as data reduction, presentation of data, and drawing conclusions.

Data collection techniques are semi-structured interviews, documents, and observations. Interviews are organised in a semi-structured manner according to the interview guidelines developed by researchers. The entire interview session is recorded with a voice recording device and the results are arranged into an interview transkip for analysis. Documentation in the form of photos or images obtained from informants. Observations are conducted directly at the foundation and at the informant’s residence.

Data analysis techniques using interactive models (Moleong, 2017) namely: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification withdrawal. Then, triangulation of data compares between the interviews and researcher’s observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The description of the informant consists of 5 pairs. The first informant couple (L1 and AL1) stayed at home only from Monday to Friday. This was also because the secondary informant (AL1) worked in Jakarta on weekdays while the holiday was used to return to Sukabumi where his son and wife lived. The second pair of informants (L2 and AL2) were aged 76 and 41. The couple does not live at home, but L2 still lives with other family members and grandchildren who always visit his house. The secondary informant (AL1) lives with her son and husband in a 3-tent contract and works as a distributor of veils and robes. The third pair (L3 and AL3) were aged 85 and 31. This third couple also does not live in 1 house but L2 still lives with her 11th child out of 12 children, secondary informant (AL3) as the last child living with her husband and child in Serpong has just given birth to her second child so often the primary informant (L3) comes to visit to see her new grandson. The fourth pair (L4 and AL4) were aged 74 and 35. Just like the previous informant couple who did not
live at home, the secondary informant (AL4) was a housewife who lived with her husband and two daughters. The fifth pair (L5 and AL5) were aged 62 and 41. Just like before who did not live at home, the secondary informant (AL5) here has just been dismissed unilaterally from his workplace, so now his daily life assists his wife to open a small stall in front of his house. L5 also who still works as a roadside retail gasolineman claimed that he forgives AL5 who can not give anything to him because he is jobless.

**Harmonization Relationships in Elderly People Living Apart from Family**

**Interpersonal Affection**, data obtained from interviews with 5 pairs of informants showed that the affection shown through the attitude of the elderly to family members who are not at home, usually the elderly directly visit the family home that is not at home. As stated in the following interview excerpt:

“Usually, I if I still want to go there doing the way directly, still dares anyway if it is still healthy... dare yourself ...sometimes after praying I go... Who’s in his house” (L3)

“In the past, the time has not been often alone, because covid, now it is hard to get vehicle” (L4)

Answers from AL3 and AL4 support this:

“Oohh yes... mother has not because it is not strong, mother yes sometimes herself ... sometimes suddenly has appeared here... sitting there” (AL3)

“Often, before the pandemic, Mother was always here, I couldn’t want to go, so Mother asked to be accompanied by her nephew and she liked to go home with my husband” (AL4)

In addition to showing affection through attitude and treatment, this can also be expressed openly to family members or show our attention indirectly, this is conveyed by L5 when longing for his grandson.

“If you say miss tour grandma gatau street, children who like to call, call mother has missed to meet that, tomorrow new week on arriving ... He’s not working so when can he arrive?”

This statement from L5 is reinforced by an answer from AL5 about the desire of the L5.

“Miss her, I will come there”

AL5 showed the attitude that when he felt longing it would go directly to the L5 residence because he did not have a mobile phone.

**Mutual understanding of fellow family members**, seen when other families can not visit the elderly due to busy work, distance of the house that is far away or other tasks. As stated by the primary informant about the busyness of his family members.

“I like to come here too but rarely, cause my home is far away from here” (L1)

“a lot of work... it works online ojek” (L2)
“I don’t expect it from children because they are also taking care of their children, especially since the child in Serpong has just given birth, so it’s really difficult.” (L3)

“Rarely ... is it far away... He’s 2 children.” (L4)

“I’m sad if they don’t come here.... because they live far away and their father isn’t working either” (L5)

Here the primary informant understands the busyness experienced by his family members so that they do not have time to visit. Secondary informant also responded to a statement from the interviewer about the busyness experienced so that he did not have time to visit his parents,

“Usually, my family and I get together especially during Eid” (AL1)

“I want to go there but the covid situation, I also work ... everything goes wrong, at least before Eid” (AL3)

“I really miss it, especially during a pandemic” (AL4)

**Dialogue or effective communication that is established in the family,** communication must continue to be woven despite the busy work or busy taking care of children as answered by the primary informants about whether their children often call in the middle of busy work,

“I like to call him but there is no phone here (laughs)” (L1)

“No, busy... now there is a cellphone” (L2)

"Yes, often but I don't have a cellphone here, so the children just call here" (L3)

“Keep in touch... how many times huh? Not every day, because the cellphone is used by her husband at work, so my son there doesn't have a cellphone. “They asked how I was and wanted to see me” (L4)

“No, don't have a phone call to him... If there's anything, then he'll date him.” (L5)

“My other child doesn't have a phone... if there's something wrong, he will give the news and come” (L5)

And about what discussions are usually discussed by the five pairs of informants usually about the activities carried out and daily life,

"Usually we chat about anything ... asking how his grandson is going to come here on Eid Mubarak" (L1)

"Definitely a story, let me be advised too... the name is parents, especially in a situation like this" (AL3)

"Yes, how are you there, want to see his grandmother (grandson)” (L4)

But it turns out there are still some informants who do not always tell problems or daily activities to other members for several reasons such as the following,
"No, my mother rarely wants something... simple person, rarely says she wants something" (AL1)

"Stories...but rarely, I rarely talk about problems here" (AL2)

"Don't say anything... if the children here like to tell stories... even if we tell stories about how to tell stories... they live far away" (L3)

"If I rarely tell stories, only parents if there is a problem... then we will find a solution... usually we negotiate, all the younger siblings are called, what is the best way so don't think I'm the eldest child... I can't make their own decisions" (AL5)

**Having time together and cooperation in the family**, in interviews with 5 pairs of informants obtained the result that family members often spend their time off chatting with family, such as going out for a walk, eating out, or just gathering to watch TV together,

"Once for a walk, only his legs couldn't walk anymore because they hurt... usually when we come, we walk and eat" (L1)

"I want to but have to be guided... Now I still like to invite you to eat out" (AL1)

"Night yes... if the night has gathered. Break it together here, drink tea together... yes, it's fun, with the grandson for sahur together" (L2)

"At least before fasting, I like to go there with Mother's house... iftar together there too, gather there for Eid" (AL2)

"There, yes seeing... just seeing..." (L3)

"I also work, Sis... confused, at least before Eid, a week before Eid I usually go home for sure to stay, stay for more than a week" (AL3)

"At least if the fast breaks together but those in Pamulang can't come" (L4)

"Opening together... likes only rarely, because far, actually has a strong desire to open together" (AL4)

"If you come to gather again, if not, it's just him (pointing to his little child) hehehehe will come" (L5)

"Every year I stay there, so today I'm takbiran until tomorrow morning when I go home. When Eid is there with parents gathering" (AL5)

**Family Communication in Elderly Living Apart from Family**

**Providing enough time**, giving time here is intended is there is effort given by family members to communicate or the way family members remain in touch amid the busyness faced and how often family members make time for each other. In interviews with 5 pairs of informants obtained the same information where each partner always tries to make time to share with other family members,
“Night... if at night we all get together” (L2)

"You have to .... Sis .... even if you just ask how are you? you still have to make a call” (AL2)

"Just calling...'how are you doing?' then Mother answered 'fine' "Yes sometimes she has a telephone which here also has one, but I don't have one... so I can't call” (L3)

There are similarities between L3 and L4 who will directly visit their children's residences if they are longing or have a busy time, seen from AL3's answer here:

"Oh, yes, mother often... but not anymore because I am no longer strong now. Mother is sometimes alone, suddenly she appears here and sits there where I happen to be not here... Oh God, didn't say that I had come” (AL3)

And excerpts of the interview with L4 here:

“Before Covid often came... because I missed my grandchildren. Since Covid, I can't go anywhere” (L4)

As for L5 Lebaran and other big days are the moments that are awaited for his son to come home.

"But during Eid yesterday... Alhamdulillah for coming here" (L5)

Listening, listening here means between family members listening to each other's problems, complaints, or requests from other family members and how open they are to each other. In the interview with L1 obtained information that between the two family members is not very open despite frequent calls.

“Like chatting on the phone” (L1)

And this answer is corroborated by an interview with AL1 in which he also replied that the chat that is commonly talked about is only around daily activities.

“... usually ask about daily life”(AL1)

Another case with an interview with L2 in which he said that he rarely calls with his distant son and prefers to talk to his son who is closer to his home, he confirmed that his distant son is already busy.

“No, on busy” (L2-LHW2-W2)

And the answer from L2 is also justified by AL2:

"Mother tells me sometimes to my sister because she is closer to my sister” (AL2-LHW7-W7)

AL2 who also rarely tells about his problems because he does not want to make his mother think and become sick.

"Yes, I rarely talk about problems here” .... You don't have to be afraid to worry " (AL2-LHW7-W7).

Unlike the relationship between L4 and his son who both like to tell each other, this was answered in an interview with L4.
"He likes stories ... sometimes ... not often". My mother is currently sick. Usually we ask about this medicine and ask Mother to take care of her current health" (L4)

And AL4 also confirmed it in his interview,

“The story... about the family there” (AL4)

Maintain Honesty, seen from the disclosure of informants to family members. As in the interview with L1, the results that both parties are not too open to each other, here is the answer from L1 when asked if he ever asked for something to his distant son.

“I never asked for pity the money he had could only be for his family” (L1)

And this was confirmed by AL1 during his interview he replied,

“No.... my mother rarely wants something... simple person, rarely says she wants something” (AL1)

Similarly, L2 where he often tells stories and asks for something to his son who is close to his home,

"At least the grandchildren who are here" "Don't say". If you give thanks, otherwise that's okay too" (L2)

here he is very grateful for his many grandchildren so that he is no longer lonely.

Other opinions are found in interviews with family members of L5 who sometimes like to tell stories or ask for something first to each other or to his brother.

"Yes, if you don't go there to others to relieve stress (laughs) only if you go far away, Grandma can't, doesn't understand the streets." (L5)

But unlike his son, AL5, who rarely told his mother.

“If I rarely” (AL5)

And AL5 confirms that the mother likes to ask to be bought or sent something by herself.

“He sometimes says that's why if we want to go there he has asked first, want bakpia...usually we ask, what do we want to bring later” (AL5).

DISCUSSION

Harmonization Relationships in Elderly People Living Apart from Family

Love Between Families, the first children’s affective is available in the family, because the family is a place for building love and affection between them. One of the 8 (eight) functions that must be carried out by the family in order to become a qualified family is the love, which is the third function of the 8 functions of the family as stated in Government Regulation No. 87 of 2014 Chapter II Article 7 paragraph (2). This function needs to be turned on as the love among family, between kinship and inter generations is the basis to create harmonious family.

The results showed that of the 5 informants interviewed about the affection between families given from secondary informants to primary informants is very good, 5 pairs of informants here show affection for each other's family members even in different ways. Affection is shown
orally, writing, deeds, and facial expressions of informants. Like when asked about his family and talking about his grandchildren, they looked very enthusiastic and radiant. This indicates that the function of love between family members runs well so that the elderly feel appreciated and loved. Previous research found that the family has a significant and positive effect on the quality of elderly’s life (Putri et al., 2019). This means that the functioning of the elderly to get family support will improve the quality life of the elderly (Al Munawaroh et al., 2016) Where they will feel happy and maximise their quality of life

**Mutual understanding of family members**, based on the results of research with 5 pairs of informants about mutual understanding in a family obtained excellent results the primary informant is so understandable for the secondary informant, but the secondary informant always tries to communicate with the primary informant. This is similar to the theory presented by Gunarsa (2012). That in addition to compassion, mutual understanding is required to create harmonious family. It is certainly difficult to understand others when we can not understand ourselves. On the other hand, building comfortable family can be attained by being able to express opinions, felt appreciated, heard, and others. One must be sure that he is truly accepted and is a full member of his family.

**Dialogue or effective communication that is established in the family**, based on the results obtained during interviews with 5 pairs of informants about communication or dialogue exchange. Although most primary informants do not have mobile phones to communicate, there are still efforts from both parties to communicate with each other even if not every day. This is considered effective for informants to strengthen relationships or friendship between them. Thus, communication is an ideal way to strengthen relationships between family members, Especially if it's done effectively (Gunarsa, 2012)

**Having time together and cooperation in the family** the peace of all family members is one form of happiness in a family. The results showed that of the 5 pairs of informants to the togetherness of time that is shown because most answers from primary informants and secondary informants usually only spend time on certain days, such as eid. Togetherness is utilized by the elderly as possible to have a meaningful time that can make them successful at their age (Ralampi & Soetjiningsih, 2019).

**Family Communication in Elderly Living Apart from Family**

**Providing enough time**, family members conduct spontaneous or (planned) non-spontaneous communication. Spontaneous, such as talking while doing work together, usually discussed trivial things. Non-spontaneous, for example planning the right time to speak, usually what is talked about is a conflict or other important thing (Gunarsa, 2012). The results from 5 informants showed that willingness of time given by secondary informants family members are good because they always take the time to contact fellow family members and in addition to communicating only other secondary informants also give their time to visit family members. Previous interviews show that calling just to ask for news or just visiting family members is one of the small businesses made to maintain a harmonious relationship with family members as busy as it is. According to Lestari (2020) Relationships fostered with the family require care and willingness to take the time to interact with other family members as busy as any daily activities that are done sincerely.

**Listening**, a family member enhances the mutual understanding of being a good and active listener. They do not judge, approve, or reject their partner's statements or opinions. They use
feedback, statement or reaffirmation, and repeat statements. (Gunarsa, 2012). In interview excerpts with some respondents, it comes to the conclusion that it turns out that there are still some family members who are not too open to listen to the complaints of other family members. It may partly understood that secondary informants are busy working or taking care of children because at the time of interviewing with primary informants many of them also understand this and prefer not to tell stories. Though the friendship relationship that is built with the younger generation, basically able to make the elderly feel more appreciated by the next generation. Seniors feel that they get a place to discuss and, also talk even though the mindset of the outgoing members is different. The elderly have a role as advisors and controllers for posterity and the next generation in their environment (Suharti & Siti Partini, 2013). Because as a person who is experienced in life has felt a lot of bitter sweetness, therefore can provide direction, advice, and control so that the life of the younger generation can be better.

**Maintain Honesty,** Family members are willing to say what their needs, feelings and thoughts are, and say what is expected of family members. Instilling honesty towards family members is very important. Honesty instilled by the family in everyday life will always be remembered, imprinted, and thrive in yourself and will become the identity of the family until anytime (Inten, 2017). Honesty here must also occur between family members, with honesty expected the family can avoid misunderstandings. The results of research on interviews with 5 pairs of informants about maintaining the honesty of fellow family members are still felt less because 3 out of 5 informants are not too honest with others about the problems faced because the elderly is afraid to disturb the minds of family members who also have a lot of busyness. The elderly merely choose to tell stories with their children whose homes are closer to him. It is natural that we usually do not want to burden too much with the problems we are facing to others.

**CONCLUSION**

1. Family harmony is seen by the five respondents having affection between families, a sense of understanding towards fellow members, communication that is carried out smoothly despite the busyness of work or taking care of children, and the willingness of a good time.

2. Aspects of communication are time and togetherness in the family seen in all respondents except the aspects of listening (4 informants who listen) and honesty (3 out of 5 pairs of informants).

**SUGGESTION**

For some families, it is suggested that fellow family members can be more honest and always listen to the complaints that family members convey to others. It for sure can prevent misunderstandings in the family by intensifying conversation time or visiting the elderly more regularly, this is to further strengthen the connection among them.

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