

## The Association between Aspect of Family Communication Dimentions Beforehand, To, and Throughout The COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the Indonesian government implementing work-from-home and Distance Learning (PJJ) regulations that affect how people communicate with others, how close they feel to each other, and how they resolve family problems. This research aims to analyze the different types of communication within the family that influence the level of closeness and differences of opinion before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This research uses quantitative research methods, collecting data through survey questionnaires and using Statistical Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the primary technique for data analysis. The results of this study show substantial changes in communication and conflict patterns in families before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, no significant differences were found before and during the pandemic in the relationship between family communication patterns and family intimacy, as well as between family intimacy and family conflict. Family intimacy is essential in mediating the relationship between family communication patterns and conflict. This study shows that increasing levels of family communication, characterized by a lack of understanding of the roles of individual family members and a focus on dialogical communication and equality, can give rise to disputes that weaken unity and harmony within the family unit. This research contributes to the field of family communication theory by showing the impact of external circumstances, such as a pandemic, on internal family dynamics.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Family Communication Pattern; Family Conflict; Family Intimacy

### Abstrak

Pandemi COVID-19 mengakibatkan pemerintah Indonesia menerapkan peraturan bekerja dari rumah dan Pembelajaran Jarak Jauh (PJJ) yang memengaruhi cara orang berkomunikasi dengan orang lain, seberapa dekat perasaan mereka satu sama lain, dan cara mereka menyelesaikan masalah keluarga. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perbedaan jenis komunikasi dalam keluarga mempengaruhi tingkat kedekatan dan perbedaan pendapat sebelum, selama, dan setelah pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kuantitatif, pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner survei dan menggunakan Statistical Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) sebagai teknik utama dalam analisis data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya perubahan substansial dalam pola komunikasi dan konflik pada keluarga sebelum dan sesudah pandemi COVID-19. Selain itu, tidak ditemukan perbedaan yang signifikan sebelum dan selama pandemi dalam hubungan antara pola komunikasi keluarga dan keintiman keluarga, serta antara keintiman keluarga dan konflik keluarga. Keintiman keluarga memainkan peran penting dalam memediasi hubungan antara pola komunikasi keluarga dan konflik. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan tingkat komunikasi keluarga yang ditandai dengan kurangnya pemahaman mengenai peran individu anggota keluarga dan fokus pada komunikasi dialogis dan kesetaraan, berpotensi menimbulkan perselisihan yang melemahkan kesatuan dan keharmonisan dalam unit keluarga. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dalam bidang teori komunikasi keluarga dengan menunjukkan dampak keadaan eksternal, seperti pandemi terhadap dinamika internal keluarga.

**Kata Kunci:** COVID-19; Keintiman Keluarga; Konflik Keluarga; Pola Komunikasi Keluarga

## Introduction

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic until the commencement of 2022, the worldwide health crisis has significantly influenced the social dynamics and routines of daily existence. Various efforts were made by the Indonesian government to minimize the transmission rate of COVID-19 infection, starting from *Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB)* or Large-Scale Social Restrictions issued by the Regional Government. The government implemented policies conducting religious activities from home, distance learning, and work-from-home (WFH), some of the measures implemented by the government. These efforts not only changed the social order but also changed the order of family life. According to Burgess and Locke (1960, as cited in Goulden, 2021), a family can be defined as a collective unit of individuals residing together within a given community, established via the bonds of matrimony, lineage, and the act of adoption. As the most fundamental unit of society, the family has undeniably experienced the repercussions of the adaptations made in response to the ongoing pandemic. Families must follow new habits that have emerged since the COVID-19 pandemic, including working from home and carrying out learning from home. Adopting novel lifestyles can also influence people's communication, relationships, and interactions within the family unit.

The emergence of new habits, such as working from home, and conducting learning from home, are examples of adjustments that were felt in each family. The handling of COVID-19 emphasizes the need for the readiness of the central government, local governments, and the community to deal with spikes in COVID-19 cases (Prasanti & Indriani, 2022). The implementation of social distancing measures inside the family has resulted in significant effects on the social and emotional dynamics among family members. Implementing social distancing measures within the family setting allows family members to

engage in meaningful interactions, fostering a deeper understanding and connection among them (Kuswanti et al., 2020). On the contrary, the frequent occurrence of continuous gatherings within a shared physical space might give rise to many conflicts and tensions. An increased frequency of family gatherings correlates with an elevated likelihood of interpersonal conflict among family members. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the cultivation of harmony and effective communication within the family unit to ensure its members' optimal functioning. This entails creating an environment that fosters security, fulfills physical and psychological needs, and promotes love and acceptance. (Detta & Abdullah, 2017). Adjustment of all productive activities performed at home affects family life, specifically communication patterns within the family.

Researchers in the field of family communication have been concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family communication (Boulton et al., 2022; Hado & Friss Feinberg, 2020; Hall et al., 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Zhen, Li, Li, Guoqiang, and Zhou (2021) examined the role of parent-child communication patterns in the relationship between social isolation, loneliness, and cell phone dependence in adolescents. The results of this study demonstrate that loneliness is found to have a notable and constructive indirect impact on the development of mobile phone dependence. Three distinct forms of parent-child communication patterns have been identified: complicated, adaptive, and maladaptive. The strength of the indirect relationship between social isolation and cell phone reliance through feelings of loneliness is less pronounced for adolescents with complex parent-child communication compared to those with maladaptive parent-child communication. Hall, Earle, Silverstone, Immel, Carlisle, and Campbell (2022) reported that family communication patterns have changed, particularly for marginalized family members who

maintain a relational distance from their families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the findings of this study, conversational orientation has been correlated with increased family communication quantity and quality. The study conducted by Hall et al. (2022) found that the correlation between everyday orientation and conformity orientation, and the quality of changes within family communication, is mediated by regard to family member marginalization.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic towards family communication in the Indonesian context was also examined by several researchers (Kaddi et al., 2020; Nursanti et al., 2021; Nuzuli, 2022; Permatasari, Inten, Wiliani, & Widiyanto, 2020; Ramadhana, Soedarsono, & Setyorini, 2022; Setyastuti, Suminar, Hadisiwi, & Zubair, 2021; Tayo, Utamidewi, Nursanti, & Abidin, 2022; Wijayanti, 2021). For example, research conducted by Permatasari et al. (2020) analyzed the intimacy of family communication that was developed before the social and physical distancing period and after the social and physical distancing period using qualitative research methods with a focus on aspects: time with family, activities with family, and quality of family time. This study revealed that time spent with family after the social and physical distancing period was more extended. Regarding activities with the family, there were no significant changes in activities with the family before and after the social and physical distancing period, only adding activities to accompany children during school hours at home and often worshiping together at home. In contrast, family time is perceived to be more intensive after social and physical distancing because everything is done at home together, and there is no need to wait for special times such as weekends (Permatasari et al., 2020). However, this research does not analyze how family communication patterns are applied to build intimate family communication before and after social and physical distancing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nursanti et al. (2021) examined the quality of health professionals' family communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study used qualitative research methods to find that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the quality of family communication, namely closeness and support among family members of health workers. During the pandemic, health workers experienced difficulties communicating face to face, touching, and having physical contact with their families. This study also found that these communication barriers can be overcome by using smartphones so that health workers can still communicate with their family members without having to have physical contact with their family members (Nursanti et al., 2021). However, there are limitations to this study; specifically, this research must analyze family communication patterns and their impact on intimacy embedded within family members during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the impact of communication barriers, such as family conflicts.

Setyastuti et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative research study to examine family communication dynamics concerning the level of satisfaction with new media technology among millennial mothers and teachers of children engaged in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study propose that millennial mothers experience positive emotions such as self-confidence, contentment, and happiness, as well as negative emotions ranging from burden, shock, frustration, and stress to depression; similarly, children who learn at home experience positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions include happiness, satisfaction, and enjoyment, whereas negative emotions include frequent school absences, fatigue, stress, and the sadness of not seeing companions at school (Setyastuti et al., 2020). The results of this study also demonstrate that the negative emotions of millennial mothers are determined by negative thoughts generated by their communication actions when assisting their

children in online learning. The opposing views of millennial mothers arise for various reasons, such as not understanding the subject matter at school, difficulties in using online learning applications, low levels of understanding of children, impatience with children, a climate of communication in the family that is less supportive, and difficulty focusing due to many distractions (Setyastuti et al., 2021). Although this research identifies the thoughts and feelings of communication between millennial mothers and children that conducted at-home learning from home during the COVID-19 outbreak, this research does not examine the patterns of family communication and family closeness that can affect communication between mothers and children, especially millennial mothers and children. –children are learning from home throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent Indonesian research on the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on family communication was conducted by Kaddi et al. (2020), Tayo et al. (2022), Nuzuli (2022), and Ramadhana et al. (2022). Research by Kaddi et al. (2020) and Tayo et al. (2022) examined how family communication can govern the prevention of COVID-19. The study demonstrates that family communication activities conducted by parents and children are instrumental in minimizing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the Donggala and Karawang Regencies. Parents use a persuasive approach to tell their children about the dangers of COVID-19 and ask them to stay at home or avoid strangers who enter their village. Clear communication from parents to children to comply with health protocols, such as wearing a mask when before departing from the house, keeping hand hygiene by washing hands, and maintaining distance when playing with peers, has been successfully implemented as an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19 infection (Tayo et al., 2022). However, this study did not look at the success factors of parent-child persuasion communication, such as family

communication patterns, quality of family communication relationships, and closeness.

The study conducted by Ramadhana et al. (2022) employed a correlational quantitative research design to investigate a theoretical framework that encompasses family communication interactions, physical resilience, and family economic well-being. This study sought to clarify the role of the family in safeguarding family health and financial well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study suggest that family communication plays a crucial role in enhancing physical resilience. This is attributed to positive communication patterns and direct engagement among family members, which protect the well-being and fulfillment of family members' needs. However, it is crucial to highlight that family communication does not significantly impact family economic resilience. The recovery from the situation can be attributed to the family's strategic thinking and prompt decision-making (Ramadhana et al., 2022).

Additionally, the present study revealed that family communication exhibited a noteworthy influence on the consequences of the pandemic within family units. According to Ramadan et al. (2022), communication has a crucial role as a preventive mechanism against the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as a means of family management. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant influence on work and social engagements, while its effects on domestic activities, as well as emotional and physical activities, have been insignificant. This study examines the association between family communication and family health and well-being. However, it does not investigate additional dimensions of family communication, such as family closeness and conflict, which may impact various aspects of family life, including household activities and the emotional and physical well-being of all family members, contributing to their resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study posits that the current state of research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on family communication is insufficient in exploring the association between the utilization of family communication patterns and the levels of family intimacy and conflict throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, this study aims to analyze the relationship between family communication patterns, family intimacy, and family conflict before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The following are the hypotheses to be tested: 1) Family communication patterns applied in the family affect the level of family conflict before the COVID-19 pandemic; 2) Family communication patterns applied in the family affect the level of intimacy that occurred in the family before the COVID-19 pandemic; 3) The level of family intimacy affects the level of conflict that occurred in the family before the COVID-19 pandemic; 4) Family communication patterns applied in the family affect the level of family conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic; 5) Family communication patterns that are applied in the family affect the level of intimacy that occurs in the family during the COVID-19 pandemic; 6) The level of family intimacy affects the level of conflict within the family during the COVID-19 pandemic; 7) Family intimacy mediates the relationship between family communication patterns and the conflict level within the family before the COVID-19 pandemic; 8) Family intimacy became a mediator in the relationship between family communication patterns and the level of conflict that occurred within the family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Family Communication Pattern**

The concept of family encompasses a collective of individuals who share a biological or marital connection. The nuclear family, consisting of a father, mother, and children, is the subject of discussion (Olson et al., 2014). Wamboldt and Reiss (1989, quoted in Segrin & Flora, 2018, p. 1) emphasize that family

definitions can be categorized into three distinct types, characterized by their emphasis on form, function, and interaction. The first family type, the structural description, defines the family according to condition. In contrast, the second and third types define the family in task orientation, and the transactional definition defines the family based on the intertwined functions and interactions within it (Segrin & Flora, 2018).

According to Fitzpatrick and Badzinski (1994, as cited in Segrin & Flora, 2018, p. 1), the structural definition refers to a specific criterion that is independent of the quality of family connection or task execution, as well as subjective feelings of group affiliation or affection. However, they exclusively define the concept of family based solely on its physical form. A family is defined as a social unit consisting of two or more individuals connected by biological, matrimonial, or adoptive ties and cohabitating. Individuals who share a natural or legal connection and cohabit constitute a family unit.

In contrast to the structural definition, the task orientation perspective emphasizes the functional aspects of family dynamics, specifically the tasks performed by family members. According to Segrin and Flora (2018), the prevailing conceptualization of task orientation characterizes the family as a social unit comprising at least one adult and one or more individuals engaged in various familial responsibilities, including socialization, parenting, personal growth, and provision of financial and emotional assistance. Based on the definition given earlier, it is evident that the social unit responsible for the child is not constrained by any structural boundaries, regardless of biological or legal connections to the child.

Next is the transactional orientation. This approach emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication and the subjective emotions generated by interactions (Segrin & Flora, 2018). The transactional definition does not

mean neglecting the duties that family members request. Instead, they argue that a family is more than a collection of individuals performing tasks for one another. From a transactional standpoint, interactions among family members exhibit several characteristics, such as intimacy, interdependence, commitment, a sense of family identity, emotional connections, symbolic representations, self-defined boundaries for family membership, and a continuous temporal dimension encompassing both the past and future. Similar to the challenges encountered in defining the concept of family, establishing a precise definition for communication also has inherent complexities. Based on a comprehensive analysis of many scholarly perspectives, it can be asserted that communication is a transactional phenomenon wherein persons create, transmit, and organize meaning (Segrin and Flora (2018).

McLeod and Chaffee initiated family-specific research in the West, focusing on the influence of media such as television, computers, and the internet on the behavior of family members. Family communication studies are growing in the West and worldwide (Segrin & Flora, 2018). One family communication study that influenced other researchers is the concept of Family Communication Pattern Measurement (FCPM). This concept concentrates on two factors that impact family communication patterns: conceptual orientation and social orientation (Bakar et al., 2016).

The Family Communication Pattern was discovered in a mass media study by McLeod and Chaffee (Mustaffa, Sannusi, & Markom, 2010). They are interested in demonstrating how families construct and share social reality, defined as shared perceptions and evaluations of the social world. In particular, they assess parenting style based on how parents instruct their children to process information from mass media. McLeod and Chaffee (Mustaffa et al., 2021) proposed two methods for couples and families to reach an agreement: social and concept orientation. Social

orientation can be understood as the process by which family members care for their relationships with one another and concentrate on evaluating other family members while pursuing shared perceptions. A family obtains a consensus by conforming to one member, typically a parent and adopting that member's evaluation as the family's evaluation. Concept orientation, in contrast, is the process by which family members focus on an object being evaluated and are concerned with how family members conceptualize that object. A family reaches a consensus by discussing the numerous conceptualizations of the members and establishing a shared perception of the thing. McLeod and Chaffee (Bakar et al., 2016) created a family communication pattern (FCP) instrument that captures strategies by concentrating on information processing.

The concept of family communication patterns focuses only on information processing, which Ritchie and Fitzpatrick introduced in 1990 (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). They attempted to reconceptualize the original instrument and devised The Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP), a more general measure of family communication patterns. RFCP is also based on two dimensions illustrating how families can construct diverse social realities (Rumata, 2017). The orientation of the concept is redefined as a conversational orientation emphasizing the value of communication between family members. Children from families with a high casual direction are socialized to see objects, problems, or messages, investigate their possible interpretations or meanings, and discuss them with others. The second dimension, socio-orientation, is conceptualized as conformity orientation and pertains to parental conformity-focused family communication. Children are socialized to adhere to their parents' interpretations of messages. (Bakar et al., 2016) emphasizes that family members are not recommended to converse or hold differing opinions. This theory identifies the fundamental process of reaching

an agreement between family members that influences communication behavior, the process of receiving information, psychosocial, and the results of conduct in the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2017).

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2017) demonstrate that applying RFCP deviated from two dimensions: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation refers to the degree to which a family cultivates an atmosphere that promotes open and unrestrained communication among all members, encompassing a broad spectrum of subjects. Families with high conversation spend much time interacting with one another, sharing activities, thoughts, and emotions, and participating in family decisions. In contrast, families with low conversation levels are those in which family members interact less frequently and only discuss a few topics openly. In this form of communication pattern, both parents and children influence one another's decision-making in family discussions (Rumata, 2017; Wallace, 2015).

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2017) emphasize that conformity orientation refers to the condition in which family members comprehend and agree with the opinion of one family member (typically parents) without prior discussion between family members. According to Koerner and Schrot (2014), conformity orientation can be defined as the degree to which family communication places importance on fostering a sense of uniformity in attitudes, values, and beliefs. Families exhibiting a high level of conformity are distinguished by their patterns of interaction that prioritize the alignment of beliefs and attitudes. Prameswary and Ramadhan's (2020) research shows that families with high conformity are coherent in implementing a hierarchical system. This means that parents have complete control over which values or attitudes all family members must understand and practice. Family members' relationships emphasize harmony,

avoiding conflict, and interdependence. The communication within this family demonstrates respect for parents and other adults. On the other hand, families with low conformity are distinguished by interactions that emphasize diverse attitudes and beliefs, as well as the individuality and autonomy of family members. In this case, parents believe in the independence of their family members and place a greater emphasis on their independent thought than on their own (Prameswary & Ramadhan, 2020).

### **Family Intimacy**

Intimacy in interpersonal communication is extracted into three things, namely established relationships, dyadic primacy, and dyadic coalitions (DeVito, 2014). Intimacy can be defined as a relationship between two people that is maintained for the mutual benefit of their proximity. From the perspective of the study of interpersonal communication, Johnson (2016) identifies the following barriers to establishing family intimacy: 1) Incorporate a sense of belonging, specifically the need to develop solid, stable, and intimate relationships. 2) It is an emotional aspect of a relationship that entails self-disclosure and produces attachment, warmth, and trust. 3) Intimacy is a relatively strong relationship with other people in which individuals can sacrifice for one another's welfare without sacrificing their identities.

Several studies examining the connection between family communication patterns and family intimacy discovered a correlation between the two (Ihsani et al., 2019; Inten, Permatasari, & Puspita, 2021; Nursanti et al., 2021; Permatasari et al., 2020; Rogoff, 2013; Widyanisa, Lubis, & Sary, 2018). According to Rogoff's (2013) dissertation, there appears to be a statistically significant correlation between the independent variables of family communication patterns and intimacy and marital satisfaction. The findings suggest that couples who exhibit high levels of intimacy or engage in consensual communication

patterns tend to report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Communication within the family is essential in building closeness or intimacy. After all, communication is also helpful in maintaining family intimacy because communication can convey expressions and feelings of closeness among family members to one another (Nicholson, 2015). Research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic conducted by Permatasari et al. (2020) and Inten (2021) shows that family communication is a factor that affects the level of intimacy within the family and can increase intimacy within the family throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Research conducted by Widyanisa et al. (2018) reported that communication limitations and the frequency of meetings affect the level of intimacy in the relationship between husband and wife. The study entitled Intimacy of Family Whatsapp Group Users by Ihsani et al. (2019) also found that family members who often communicate have a high level of intimacy.

Permatasari et al. (2020) argue that the factor that influences the level of intimacy within the family is the ability of family members to understand and communicate their respective roles. In addition, Nicholson (2015) argues that someone from a happy, intact family is more likely to be in a romantic and intimate relationship than someone from a broken, miserable family, such as a divorce. Other findings are in a study conducted by Andersson, Mullins, and Johnson (1990 in Segrin & Flora, 2018). They concluded that overly involved parents who emphasize excessive intimacy in parent-child relationships could be as harmful as less active parents. And negligent regarding the production of lonely children. It can be concluded that family intimacy is an essential variable in family communication.

### **Family Conflict**

According to Marta and Alfieri (2014), family conflict is active conflict among individuals within a family unit. Family conflict can emerge in several forms, such as verbal, physical, sexual,

financial, or psychological, due to the inherent characteristics of family relationships. Various permutations of family members can be involved in family conflict, including couples, parents, children, and siblings.

Everything can become a problem in the family system with different family and cultural communication patterns (Guan & Li, 2017). Galvin, Braithwaite, and Bylund (2018) assert that sharing resources and time among family members is so extensive that conflict becomes customary and unavoidable. Familial conflicts often arise from content-related matters such as household responsibilities and financial issues, as well as relationship-related concerns such as love, power dynamics, and parental attention. (Radhiya, Nurwati, & Irfan, 2020; Susilowati & Susanto, 2020). However, until now, no primary factor underlies the occurrence of conflict in the family. Research conducted by Storaasli and Markman (1990 in Overall & McNulty, 2017) found that in the first period of marriage, various types of problems were found, namely financial problems; communication problems; sex disorders; problems with relatives, friends, and children; jealousy, recreation (spending time together drinking alcohol and using drugs); as well as religious issues. According to Overall and McNulty (2017), there is a tendency for discussions on friends, religion, and jealousy to decline over time. In contrast, themes related to sex, communication, and recreation tend to become more prevalent.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government issued WFH regulations for all employees in private and educational institutions. The effects of staying at home situations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic caused, for some families, become a crisis period that is prone to stress and depression, which can lead to conflict (Manna, Doriza, & Oktaviani, 2021; Radhiya et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused cases of domestic violence to increase due to declining economic conditions

in the family and isolation during the pandemic (Radhiyya et al., 2020).

Various studies have shown that the divorce rate in several regions of Indonesia has increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aini, 2021; Ramadhani & Nurwati, 2021; Tyas & Prastyoning, 2021; U. T. Wijayanti, 2021). The leading causes of divorce are also almost the same as the causes of domestic violence, namely financial income, which has decreased dramatically due to termination of employment (PHK), reduced working hours, and reduction/deduction of salary. This condition is the main cause of family disharmony, which leads to conflict and divorce (Fauziah & Afrizal, 2021).

Research conducted by Crosbie and Moore (2004 in Palumbo, 2020) found that WFH can provide advantages and disadvantages for workers. The benefits of WFH are that workers have more personal time, flexibility in managing work time, reduced conflicts with co-workers, and no need to spend energy and money on mobility from home to work. While the disadvantages of WFH are that at work, it is often disrupted by activities at home, especially if the children are also at home at the same time, feelings of isolation from the environment and co-workers, workload, and work time increase (Palumbo, 2020). Even though employees have an interest in maintaining a work-from-home scheme both full-time and part-time because the relationship between family members is getting better when implementing WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mungkasa, 2020), Abd Majid, Bakar, Marlon, and Bokhari (2018) argues that the level of marital conflict among couples who live together is higher than that of couples who live separately. So it needs to be further investigated whether WFH during the COVID-19 pandemic can cause family conflict. The gap in this research is that previous research has highlighted the impact of the pandemic on family communication patterns. Still, there has been no in-depth research on how family communication patterns were adapted

during the COVID-19 pandemic to impact closeness between family members. The novelty of this research is how effective communication patterns during a pandemic are in preventing family conflicts.

This study aims to analyze the effect of family communication patterns on the level of family intimacy and family conflict before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research contributes to family communication theory by describing how external factors such as pandemics can affect the internal dynamics of a family.

## Research Methods

Quantitative research methods were used in this study by distributing questionnaire surveys to measure the relationship between family communication patterns, family intimacy, and family conflict before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are three variables measured in this study, namely: 1) Family Communication Patterns which have been developed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) as an independent variable named variable X; 2) Family Conflict developed by Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1992) as a dependant variable named variable Y; 3) and Family Intimacy developed by Permatasari et al. (2020) as a mediating variable named variable Z. The structural model to be tested in this study can be seen in Figure 1.

This research used the SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) technique to analyze the data. SEM is a multivariate statistical method that incorporates aspects of path, factor, and multiple regression analysis, enabling researchers to observe a series of interdependent dependency relationships (Tarka, 2018). Using the SEM method influenced this study in determining the number of samples. Muthen and Satorra (1995, quoted by Tarka, 2018) provide guidelines for determining sample size, including: 1) The recommended sample size for estimating parameters using the maximum likelihood

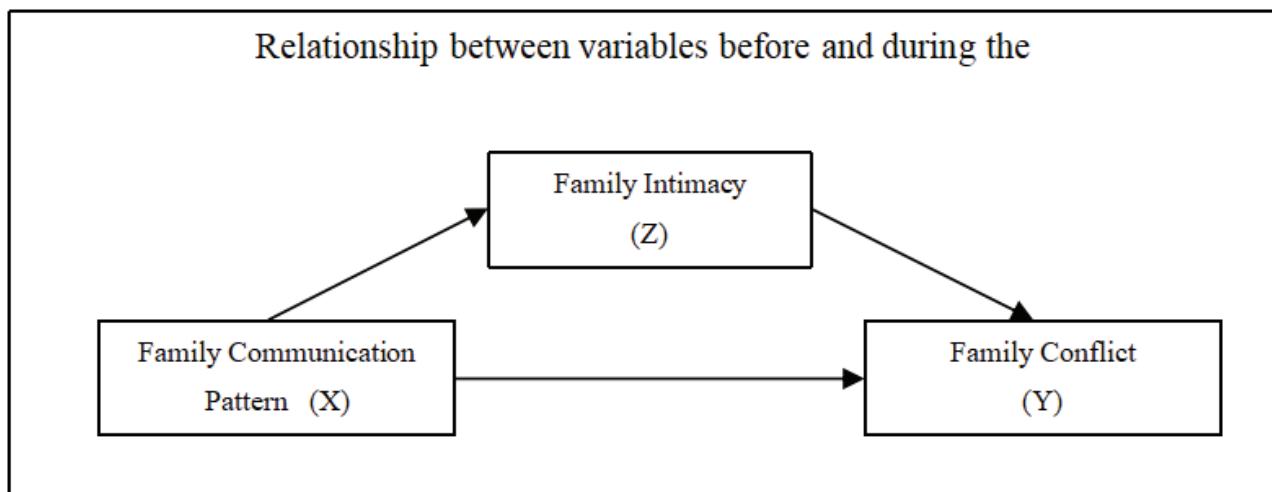


Figure 1. Research Structural Model (2023)

estimation method is between 100 and 200, with a minimum sample size of 50; 2) Between 5 and 10 times the number of model parameters, and; 3) Equal to five to ten times the total number of latent variable indicators.

The number of indicators in this study was 11 indicators. Referring to the guidelines presented by Muthen and Satorra (1995 in Tarka, 2018), the minimum sample size is  $5 \times 11$  indicators, and a result of 55 samples is obtained. Seeing the number of pieces and referring to the first point, the researchers determined the number of samples in this study was 200 respondents in the category of working fathers or mothers who had or were carrying out work from home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic in the March-September period. 2020 as many as 100, and for the category of children and adolescents who are students and students with an age range of 15-24 years, unmarried, and have or are implementing distance learning in the March-September 2020 period, as many as 100 respondents.

### Research Results and Discussions

The number of respondents who answered the research questionnaire was 254, divided into two categories, namely the parent and child categories. The parents' class consisted of 114 respondents consisting of working fathers and

mothers who had or were carrying out work from home (WFH) and had children with status as students or college students aged 15-24 years and unmarried, and had or were currently carrying out distance learning in the March-September 2020 period. As for the children category, 140 respondents were students or university students with an age range of 15-24 years and were not married and had working fathers or mothers, and had or were implementing work-from-home regulations (WFH) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in the March-September 2020 period.

The results of the significant parameter test in Table 1 show that the effect of family communication patterns (X) on family conflict (Y) before the COVID-19 pandemic with a coefficient of -0.142 and  $P\text{-Value} < 0.05$ , the result is said to be significant. The negative coefficient indicates that the higher the value of family communication patterns (X), the more family conflict (Y) will decrease. The effect of family communication patterns (X) on family intimacy (Z) before the COVID-19 pandemic with a coefficient of 0.432 and  $P\text{-Value} < 0.05$ , the result is said to be significant (influential). The positive coefficient indicates that the better the value of family communication patterns (X), the more family intimacy (Z) will increase. Meanwhile, the influence of family intimacy (Z)

Table 1. Variable Correlational Test Results

Correlation	P-Value	Conclusion	Explanation
<b>Before</b>			
Correlation from X to Y	0,009	H1 accepted	Significant negative
Correlation from X to Z	0,00	H2 accepted	Significant positive
Correlation from Z to Y	0,00	H3 accepted	Significant positive
Z as mediator	0,00	H7 accepted	Significant
<b>After</b>			
Correlation from X to Y	0,409	H4 rejected	Positive not significant
Correlation from X to Z	0,00	H5 accepted	Significant positive
Correlation from Z to Y	0,00	H6 accepted	Significant positive
Z as mediator	0,00	H8 accepted	Significant

Source: Results of research data processing (2023)

on family conflict (Y) before the COVID-19 pandemic, with a coefficient of 0.851 and *P-Value* <0.05, was significant (influenced). The positive coefficient indicates that the higher the value of family intimacy (Z), the more family conflict (Y) will increase. Thus, it can be concluded that H1, H2, and H3 are accepted.

Table 1 shows that the influence of the family communication pattern variable (X) on family conflict (Y) indirectly through the family intimacy variable (Z) before the COVID-19 pandemic with a *P-Value* <0.05 was significant. So, it can be said that the family intimacy variable (Z) mediates the effect of family communication (X) on family conflict (Y). This indicator shows that H7 is accepted, namely, family intimacy mediates the relationship between family communication patterns and the level of conflict that occurred in the family before the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are different results from measuring the relationship between the variables of communication patterns (X), family conflict (Y), and family intimacy (Y) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The effect of family communication patterns (X) on family conflict (Y) during the COVID-19 pandemic with a coefficient of 0.04 and *P-Value* > 0.05, the result is said to be insignificant (no effect). So that H4 is rejected, family communication patterns applied in the family affect the level of family conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the effect of family communication patterns (X) on family

intimacy (Z) during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a coefficient of 0.359 and *P-Value* <0.05, this indicator shows that family communication patterns (X) have a significant effect on family intimacy (Z) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The positive coefficient indicates that the better the value of family communication patterns (X), the more family intimacy (Z) will increase. Meanwhile, the effect of family intimacy (Z) on family conflict (Y) with a coefficient of 0.795 and *P-Value* <0.05 is significant. The positive coefficient indicates that the higher the value of family intimacy (Z), the more family conflict (Y) will increase. Hence. It can be concluded that H5 and H6 are accepted.

Table 1 also shows that there is a significant influence between the family communication pattern variable (X) on family conflict (Y) indirectly through the family intimacy variable (Z) with a *P-Value* >0.05 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it can be said that the family intimacy variable (Z) mediates the effect of family communication (X) on family conflict (Y) during the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicator shows that H8 is accepted, namely, family intimacy mediates the relationship between family communication patterns and the level of conflict that occurs within the family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study analyzes the relationship between family communication patterns and conflicts before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study found that before the COVID-19 pandemic, family communication patterns had a negative (significant) effect on family conflict.

This indicates that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the higher the value of family communication patterns, the lower the possibility of family conflict. The better the communication between parents and children, the chances of conflict occurring in the family can be minimized. And vice versa, if the communication patterns applied in the family are not good or not harmonious, then family conflicts will increase

(Kusuma, 2017). There is a tendency for children to commit juvenile delinquency if they are often involved in unresolved conflicts with their parents (Kusuma, 2017). A good communication strategy in communication planning based on openness between one another can minimize disputes and maintain harmonious relationships within the family (Rachmadani, 2013).

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, family communication patterns had a positive relationship and did not affect (not significant) family conflict. These findings explain that the COVID-19 pandemic does not affect family communication patterns that are applied to the level of conflict in the family. Other factors affect the level of family conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic; changes in the social order and other differences experienced by all family members, such as WFH and learning from home, can increase stress and depression. Other factors that may be the cause of family conflict are anxiety and depression due to reduced family income, loss of jobs owned by family members, as well as limited social activities that all family members can carry out as an effect arising from the implementation of social distancing policies issued by the government. In addition, another factor that is indicated to be a factor that can affect the level of family conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic is the reduced quality time that each family member has for himself due to the high frequency of meetings held by family members or reduced privacy.

Regarding the relationship between family communication patterns and family intimacy, this study found a positive and influential (significant) relationship between family communication patterns and family intimacy both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The more often family members communicate, the higher the closeness of family members. These results are supported by research conducted by Ihsani et al. (2019), which shows that family members who often communicate have a high level of

intimacy. And vice versa, if the frequency of communication between family members tends to be low, then the level of family intimacy decreases. Research conducted by Widyanisa et al. (2018) also found the same thing as this study, namely, the limitations of communication and the frequency of meetings affect the level of intimacy between a husband and wife in a long-distance relationship.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government implemented a social distancing policy, resulting in various policy outcomes such as working from home (WFH) and distance learning. With this policy, all family members must stay at home and carry out routine activities such as work, college, or school from home. This will lead to increased communication, physical contact, and togetherness for all family members who live together at home. The intensity of family communication and togetherness will strengthen the bonds of family members, especially when problems arise within the family and when issues arise (Triwardhani & Chaerowati, 2019). During the period of social distancing, the pattern of family communication that is appropriate to apply is dialogue-oriented communication or conversation orientation, namely communication that greatly liberates family members to express what they feel and think verbally, highly respects the opinions of family members, and upholds the results of the agreement of all family members. Family members are highly respected (Permatasari et al., 2020). At this time, parents have many opportunities to listen to their children, namely by understanding, responding to, and asking about their children's feelings or opinions. Likewise, during this time of social distancing, husbands and wives have many opportunities to understand, respond to, and ask about each other's feelings or opinions.

This study found that family intimacy positively and significantly correlated with family conflict before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The higher the level of intimacy of

family members, the higher the conflict between family members. The increased frequency of family communication will cause family closeness also to increase. Family conflicts will occur more often in families with high closeness or intimacy. The higher frequency of meetings and togetherness is directly proportional to the level of conflict within the family (Lestari, 2016). Adams and Laursen's research (2001 in Lestari, 2016) revealed that disputes are more common in the family than in other social contexts, such as relationships between friends or co-workers. This is because the frequency of meetings between family members is higher when compared to different social contexts, such as co-workers or friendships, directly proportional to intimacy.

During the social distancing period, the level of family conflict increases. Family conflicts arise because they are triggered by other factors, such as parents who lose their jobs, so they experience economic difficulties and stress for children and parents due to the implementation of distance learning. This factor causes the frequency of family communication to increase, which affects the intensity of conflict in the family. Supposedly, the higher the family intimacy, the lower the family conflict. Family members understanding and carrying out their respective roles will cause communication to run effectively (Permatasari et al., 2020). So, even though the social distancing period has made family members more intimate with one another, conflicts will often occur if they cannot play their roles properly.

The present study has revealed that the degree of family closeness has a mediating role in the relationship between family communication patterns and family conflict. The findings indicate that family intimacy is critical in mediating this relationship before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings suggest that the intimacy level between family members will strengthen or weaken family communication patterns and levels of conflict within the family before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From a transactional standpoint, the concept of family encompasses various elements like intimacy, dependency, commitment, sentiments of family identification, emotional connections, self-defined symbols and boundaries for family membership, and a continuous history and future (Segrin & Flora, 2018). So it can be concluded that family communication patterns indirectly relate to family conflict through family intimacy. The more intense the frequency of family communication, the more intimate family relationships will cause conflict.

## Conclusion

The research findings indicate notable disparities in the correlation between family communication practices and family disputes before and throughout the COVID-19 epidemic. This study argues that family communication patterns are not always the cause of conflict in the family. Many factors cause friction in the family. Job loss, economic difficulties in the family, difficulties adapting to working from home (WFH), and home learning patterns cause stress and depression in family members. Anxiety and depression experienced by family members trigger conflict in the family.

This study argues that even though the frequency of family communication is high, it does not mean the family conflict level is low. The high intensity of family communication can be a cause of conflict. Thus, this study suggests that the increased power of family communication without being accompanied by an understanding of the role of each family member and the application of family communication oriented towards dialogue communication and equality communication pattern, family conflict will still threaten family unity and harmony.

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant disparity in the association between family communication patterns and family intimacy, as well as the association between family intimacy and

family conflict, both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Family intimacy substantially mediates the association between family communication patterns and family conflicts before and amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study posits that family closeness assumes a significant function in family communication. Family intimacy is formed from family communication patterns. Family communication that tends to apply high conversation and gives trust to family members to carry out their respective roles will become more intimate with fellow family members. However, high family closeness can also trigger conflict in the family if family members cannot carry out their respective roles and can overcome the causes that trigger stress and depression experienced by family members. So this study states that family intimacy based on an understanding of the role of each family member and the family's ability to deal with problems will reduce the possibility of conflict in the family.

Further research can be developed using a mixed method to obtain more in-depth and specific results related to family communication patterns, intimacy, and conflict. This can be done to find other factors outside of the variables that have been studied previously, such as factors that influence family communication patterns on family conflict and family intimacy before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this research can be redeveloped by further examining the comparison of results between parent and child respondents to see whether there were any differences felt by the two before and during the COVID-19 pandemic related to family communication patterns, intimacy, family, and family conflict. In addition, serial research can also be considered in this study by dividing specific timeframes related to the current situation and conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic to obtain more particular comparisons of results. The classification of respondents can be further developed so that the research results can better represent the entire population.

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