Maintaining Family Communication in Long-Distance Relationship
Between International Students and Parents

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ABSTRACT

Communication is an important thing in an individual's life. Communication is also necessary for the family environment to maintain a harmonious relationship among family members. Parents certainly want the best for their children, including children's education, and they are willing to let their children study abroad, which makes them have to undergo long-distance relationships. In long-distance relationships, parents and children will face difficulties and challenges that require them to maintain family communication, including self-disclosure and trust in each other. The theory used in this research is the Self-Disclosure Theory by Altman and Taylor (1973). This study uses a qualitative interpretive research method with a phenomenological approach focusing on the informants' experiences. In addition, the researcher used in-depth interview techniques in the data collection process to gather information about the experience of parents and children on how they maintain family communication in long-distance relationships.

Based on the research conducted on children studying abroad and parents experiencing long-distance relationships, it was found that each family has different ways of maintaining family communication during long-distance relationships. Maintaining family communication in long-distance relationships requires self-disclosure and a sense of trust in each other to achieve a harmonious family relationship. In this study, parents and children are committed to maintaining family communication so that family communication can remain stable and effective as before in a long-distance relationship. Overall, results suggested that a person's commitment to the relationship is enhanced by their maintenance efforts to maintain family communication in a long-distance relationship.

Keyword: Family Communication, long-distance relationship, family communication.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Accordingly in order to create harmony in the family, communication between parents and children is the utmost importance. Experts agree that communication is very strategic in preparing children for their future. A good example of this would be how children from the family communicate with one another or even with multiple individuals. The success of this communication is very dependent on the family; the family is the first place a child will learn and develop in their everyday lives. Children can communicate correctly outside the family environment if the family teaches them through effective interactions. On the other hand, if the family teaches children how to communicate properly and correctly, what is taught will carry over into the wider environment. (Grynch,2012, as cited in Santrock,2007).

Communication within a family is different from communication between any other group. The type of communication that occurs in a family is different from that which occurs in other families. Each family has its communication style (Djamarah, 2004, p. 1). Children and parents have a wide variety of relationships; some parents dominate, some parents are humble and indifferent, and some parents are familiar, open, and friendly with their children. Communication in the family is formed when a reciprocal relationship between the father, mother, and child is established.

Communication is expected to be effective because it can result in understanding and pleasure, influence attitudes, and improve relationships and actions. By sharing the same views, parents and children can communicate openly and honestly about the problems children faced.

Children are experiencing the ability to communicate openly between parents and children is essential in the socialization process and in avoiding conflicts that may arise in adolescents and in the interactions between parents and children. So, that children's problems can be solved through communication between parents and children.

Building and developing effective communication within the family is essential. Several factors determine whether or not information can be effectively communicated within a family, namely (Suranto, 2011:82-84):

1. Clear than information that is constantly changing.

2. Assertiveness: Assertiveness does not mean authoritarian, but it can help convince children or other family members that the communicator truly believes in their values or perspectives.

3. Trust: with trust clarify the sending and receiving of information and expand the communicant's opportunities to achieve his goals.

Loss of trust in others will hinder the development of close interpersonal relationships

4. Supportive: To be present, involved, and helpful while still keeping your child's best interests in mind.

Family communication is a daily activity that is usually conducted face-to-face. There are, however, only a few families that meet regularly. Many families in Indonesia are away because some of their members have migrated. Family members may migrate for various reasons, including to pursue a degree. Usually, family members migrate because the study is carried out by members of the family who have just graduated from high school.

Therefore, the communication process within the family will be affected by this condition. According to a study conducted by the Indonesian Association of International Education Consultants, more than 35,000 Indonesian student study abroad annually. When students choose to migrate, which means they must move to a different area to complete their education, they will engage in long-distance family communication with their parents. Communication between parents and overseas students is more accessible than it used to be. There are several social media platforms available that enable students and their parents to communicate efficiently. In addition, various features enable overseas students and their parents to monitor the situation anywhere at any time.

The decision to continue education elsewhere was one of the personal decisions they made.

This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of overseas students. Students migrate to continue their education at their favorite universities and gain more independence. This has resulted in many children being separated physically from their parents. Nevertheless, due to the evolution of incessantly sophisticated information technology, separation is no longer a significant problem in today's society. One of the most noticeable changes is the development of social media via the Internet. According to data from January 2022 global overview, approximately 58,4% of the world's population uses social media, as evidenced by the emergence of applications and communication tools. There are 4,62 billion people worldwide who use social media, the number of social media users has increased by 424 million in the past 12 months, and the average daily time spent on social media is 2 hours and 27 minutes.

Effective communication is essential in family relationships. In family relationships, parents are people children can trust and understand what the children are going through. Children's lack of trust is triggered by their thoughts which lead their parents to worry and burden them, making them unable to concentrate on work. Additionally, this triggers self-disclosure between children and their parents. Self-disclosure refers to the act of revealing personal information about ourselves that others are unlikely to discover in other ways; this information touches upon topics we would not even consider discussing

with certain individuals; thus, our feelings and thoughts remain private (Tang et al.,2013).

A person will be more receptive to their closest friends and family members. To open up, we need the comfort and confidence of someone we can trust or someone with whom we already have close, similar ties and who shares our values and worldview. According to Prisbell and Anderson, whom Budyatna and Leila mentioned, close relationships are characterized by a high degree of friendship and affection, trust, self-disclosure, and responsibility on both sides (2011: 156). On the other hand, a person may isolate oneself due to persistent feelings of loneliness, a lack of attention, and the unpredictability of communication.

Problem Statement

In maintaining family communication in long-distance relationship, both parents and children have to make an effort to maintain their family communication so the communication can remain stable and effective. But when children doing a study abroad most of Indonesian students who study abroad have difficulty adapting and living abroad, because what they imagine and get is not the same. Mainly because of the relationship factor that becomes distant, one of the relationships is the relationship with parents and relatives. Indonesian students who studied abroad frequently suffer from severe stress, lose concentration, want to commit suicide, and want to be alone all the time.

They choose to keep it to themselves and not telling their parents or friends because it's hard to tell them from the distance and mostly they don't want to burden their parents. Having long-distance relationships may pose a challenge to Indonesian students who study abroad and potentially create gaps in their relationships and it's fascinating to study. The researcher wants to know how to maintain family communication in a long-distance relationship between parents and children studying abroad.

Research Objective

This research describes how parents and children maintain their family communication in long-distance relationship.

Research Significance

Theoretically, this research is expected to provide additional knowledge of science and academically explain information related to science within the communication field. Especially, to understand how to maintain family communication in a long-distance relationship between parents and children that studying abroad. Practically, It is expected that the results of this study will provide information on benefits and input to the field of communication science regarding children's behavior and their relationship with their parents, specifically how to maintain family communication between children and their parents while studying abroad. Socially, it

contributes to public understanding of family communication during long-distance relationships between parents and children studying abroad.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses an interpretive paradigm because the researcher wanted to study humans' experiences relating to each other. Turnomo Rahardjo (2005:41) stated that the interpretive paradigm is theoretical thoughts (communication) that seek to find the meaning of an action and text. The emphasized aspect in the interpretive paradigm is subjectivism, or the excellence of an individual's experience. Interpretive theories describe the active thought process to recall an individual's experience or any event that had previously happened to them (Littlejohn, 2017:29).

Communication in the tradition of phenomenological thinking is understood as an exchange of personal experiences through dialogue activities. Phenomenology looks much more at the individual as the critical component in the communication process; in phenomenology— interpretation forms what is fundamental for the person. (Craig in Littlejohn, 2017:40-41). The phenomenological approach aims to understand the phenomena regarding what is understood by the research's subject. Such as perception, motivation, behavior, action, and other things holistically, and by describing in the form of words and language in a

particular natural context by utilizing natural method.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Type

Research with a phenomenological approach is defined as subjective experience or a study of consciousness from the principal perspective of a person. This approach is often used as a presumption to refer to subjective experiences from various kinds and types of subjects.

Research Subjects

The subjects of this research are children who studying abroad and experience a long-distance relationship with their parents age 20-25 years old. Beside that the researcher also conduct an interview of parents that experience long-distance relationship with children.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique used in this research is the in-depth interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with children who studying abroad and parents who experienced long-distance relationship with their children.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this research is a data analysis technique referred to as the Van Kaam method (Moustakas,2013:100).

THE TEXTURAL AND STRUCTURAL MEANING MAINTAINING FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Effective Family Communication

Effective communication is an essential characteristic of a strong and healthy family. According to research, communication is integral to developing the parent-child relationship (Peterson & Green, 2009). Parent and children can be trapped in a never-ending power struggle without practical communication skills. Families need to establish effective communication so that children can communicate all their problems (Steede, 2005:5).

Effective communication between parents and children in the family will positively affect the relationship between parents and children because there is openness and mutual respect between them. Children can convey everything they feel or want by establishing effective communication within the family. Eventually, with effective communication in the family, a tendency for assertive behavior will emerge, resulting in an atmosphere of affection and responsibility that contributes to a harmonious family environment. A harmonious atmosphere can be created in the family if there is openness and effective communication both verbally and non-verbally.

Effective family communication can be created because of the maintenance and management of relationships using the right way, according to the theory of relational maintenance. The theory refers to behaviour or actions that appear in each individual to maintain relationships, such as relationships with close friends, relationships with lovers and relationships with family (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009: 151).

Long Distance Relationship

It is necessary to recognize that long-distance relationships develop out of close family relationships geographically, which begin to create distances as the child is required to study abroad. The factor of a family maintaining a long-distance relationship is due to the strong desire to maintain relationships that have already been established previously (Dansie, 2012).

In the Long-Distance Relationship, there is an application of this interpersonal communication concept in which every family who undergoes family communication remotely manages their relationship through communication to ensure that the relationship is harmonious. Although they do not meet in person, they continue to exchange messages and video calls while maintaining their established relationship through self-disclosure.

Despite the development of technology, long-distance relationships still present some challenges for families. These challenges include being unable to make face-to-face contact, reduced communication intensity, difficulty determining the time to communicate due to time differences, connection problems, and schedule clashes.

Specifically, the challenges children and parents face in long-distance relationships can produce many negative things. However, not a few families who experience long-distance relationships manage to maintain their relationships. Long-distance relationships require the right attitude and strategy in order to overcome obstacles.

Each family maintains its relationship differently, and some families do not maintain their relationships. Families must maintain their relationships by being open to each other. Openness to each other is an essential part of maintaining a family relationship. Self-disclosure is, therefore, essential and needs to be conducted.

In conducting self-disclosure, children and parents involves disclosing information about oneself that is usually not known to others. They're open up by sharing personal information, such as hopes, fears, feelings, thoughts, and experiences, this is because there is mutual trust in each other. The outcome of the research pointed out that all of the informants had maintain their family communication according to five aspects of self-disclosure by Altman & Taylor (1973) which includes; accuracy, motivation, time, intensity, and depth and breath. The effort that children made such as giving a good response to parents, strives to remain contact with parents and checking up on them. For parents the effort they made such as motivates children by providing support and advice to them during their study abroad so that they can remain enthusiastic about carrying out their studies abroad and achieve their goals. Apart from that, the outcome of the research revealed that to maintain effective family communication can only happen if the effort is made from both parents and children.

Maintaining Family Communication

In the long-distance relationship between parents and children, difficulties and problems will inevitably arise, affecting their communication. Therefore, children and parents play an essential role in maintaining family communication in long-distance relationships to achieve a harmonized family. A family's communication can be viewed as the heart's role in the body, which is extremely important.

According to Gunarsa (2002), a harmonious family can be defined as one in which all members feel happy, characterized by reduced tension, disappointment, and satisfaction with all circumstances and their existence, including physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. Harmony in the family can be defined as the responsibility of fostering a relationship based on mutual respect, mutual acceptance, mutual trust, and mutual affection. Harmonious families can provide a person with happier more worthy, and more peaceful life. Harmony in a family is characterized by harmonious relationships, open communication, and a sense of warmth among members. A harmonious family is one in which all family members carry out their respective rights and obligation, support each other, and display mutual understanding, communication,cooperation.

Each individual or family member must work together to create and follow any

rules established in the relationship to maintain a harmonized family relationship. According to Patton (1998), certain aspects are required to keep the connection on the main rail (Patton, 1998, p. 16): affection, appreciation, acknowledgment, absolute, acceptance, and action.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Every family has a different way of maintaining family communication. However, based on thee research, all informants maintain familyy communication during long-distance relationships. All informants, children and parents, regularly communicate before long-distance relationships and decide to continue to communicate regularly after long-distance relationships even though the intensity of communication is reduced. Efective family communication achieved by implementing and putting efforts into keeping the relationship in a specific condition following the ten elements of relational maintenance theory. Children and parents had pleasant interactions, keeping an open relationship throughout the long-distance relationship, spending quality time together, and parents were directing their children in the right direction during the long-distance relationship. However, there are children who do not maintain family communication during long-distance relationships due to strict parents and a lack of mutual commitment between parents. As a result,

they feel freer and more pleasant in a long-distance relationship because their parents do not constrain them. Self-disclosure is the key to maintaining family communication during long-distance relationships. Being open to each other is an essential part of maintaining family communication. Informants children and parents disclose themselves during long-distance relationships. Informants respond positively to communication as a method of self-disclosure. Both children and parents remain committed to communicating regularly throughout long-distance relationships, family communication will remain effective as before in long-distance relationships. children trust parents by sharing their personal information because they are open to each other and trust each other. Family communication can be maintained by providing opportunities and spaces for each other to develop and achieve their ambitions, as demonstrated by parents who support their children financially and monitor their progress in education without forcing their will on their children. Furthermore, children who studied abroad felt appreciated and noticed by their parents and tried to fulfill their responsibilities.

Recommendations

a. Academic Recommendation

This research can still be developed from different perspectives, such as considering a more comprehensive range of genders and ages in informants.

b. Practical Recommendation

Long-distance relationship can run smoothly if a relationship in the family is harmonious,close, and trusting each other, because openness and trust between parents and children can affect a person's openness in the family.

c. Social Recommendation

This study aims to open the public view, especially parents and children who will undergo long-distance relationship in order to understand how to maintain family communication in long-distance relationship.

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