

Understanding Broken Communication: Parent-Child Relationships in Broken Home Families

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on understanding the factors contributing to misunderstandings in family communication, particularly within *broken home* families. A *broken home* refers to families experiencing *disharmony* or separation due to various factors, such as emotional conflicts, financial stress, or external pressures. The aim of this study is to explore these factors in-depth and provide practical solutions for improving interactions between parents and children in these families. Using a descriptive qualitative research method, the study analyzes communication patterns in *dysfunctional families*, providing a detailed understanding of the underlying issues. The findings reveal that openness in communication is crucial for rebuilding healthy parent-child relationships. Effective communication not only plays a key role in conflict resolution but also lays the foundation for creating a harmonious family environment based on understanding, trust, and mutual support. This research highlights the importance of nurturing *family communication skills* to strengthen family bonds and offers insights into how families can foster more positive and supportive relationships.

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Introduction

The family is an institution formed by the bond of marriage, in which married couples live together legally, harmoniously, and peacefully, with the aim of forming a happy and prosperous family both physically and mentally. In addition, the family is also the smallest social structure in society, consisting of several individuals—typically the *head of the family* and other family members—who live together under one roof and are interdependent due to the bonds of marriage, sharing both joy and sorrow. Every family member should feel a sense of security and comfort. All children desire to live in a harmonious and intact family; gathering with their parents and feeling the complete affection of both parents can significantly support the child's psychological growth (Ryandini & Destiwati, 2021).

Unfortunately, not all children can live peacefully with their families, and conflicts among family members are not uncommon. Quarrels, disputes, or differences of opinion

within a family are considered normal because, although family members are not always related by blood, each individual has their own interests, traits, and ways of thinking. Some children have the opportunity to experience affection in a harmonious family, while others must endure the suffering caused by family discord. Differences of opinion are normal and can lead to conflict, but in resilient families, these conflicts are resolved and do not persist. However, conflicts that escalate to divorce often occur because family members are unwilling to compromise, resulting in ongoing disputes (Ryandini & Destiwati, 2021).

According to Spanier and Thompson (1984), divorce can be understood as a response to an unsuccessful marital relationship, rather than a rejection of the institution of marriage itself. In every society, there are institutions that manage the process of ending a marriage, including divorce, similar to the way institutions facilitate marriage itself. Furthermore, Murdock (1950) discussed the comparison of divorce rates in families in developing countries (Priska Adristi, 2023).

Children from families that have experienced divorce or *broken homes* are more vulnerable to negative behaviors due to their psychological and emotional states, which are easily influenced by negative factors in the surrounding environment. Family problems can include disharmonious interactions, household breakdowns, inadequate economic conditions, and a lack of parental attention to the child's academic achievement. One significant impact is low motivation to learn among children (Priska Adristi, 2023). According to Ihrom in Hadianiti, Nunung, & Rudi (2017), the post-divorce period is the most challenging for children, as they must develop new coping skills to adapt to their changed circumstances.

Interrupted communication refers to the presence of obstacles in the process of exchanging information, ideas, or messages between two or more parties, causing the intended message to be misunderstood or not received at all. These disruptions can be caused by miscommunication, misinterpretation, technical issues, or a general lack of communication. Therefore, communication within the family plays a crucial role in building harmonious relationships among family members. Through family communication patterns, each member can convey messages to one another, whether between parents and children or between spouses. In these interactions, parents and children share thoughts, instill values, and express problems or complaints. However, communication between children and parents is different from communication among peers. Every child desires a close relationship with their parents, even though in reality, this is not always possible. Parental separation or family disharmony often becomes a barrier to effective communication between children and parents. Children who need parental attention and affection may experience negative impacts due to parental separation. Family disharmony, characterized by repeated conflicts and quarrels leading to divorce, can create an uncondusive home environment. In such situations, parental attention to children tends to decrease, potentially hindering their development, especially during adolescence (M. Rebekah Santi, F. Koagouw, n.d.). Therefore, effective communication is essential as the foundation for building family harmony, particularly in managing recurring conflicts and preventing divorce. Effective communication is characterized by openness, empathy, support, positive attitudes, and equality among family members. With such communication, each family member can honestly express their feelings and thoughts while understanding each other's perspectives, allowing for collaborative solutions to various problems.

Previous research by Ryandini & Destiwati (2021) emphasized that communication within the family is crucial for building harmony, especially in families facing issues such as divorce or *broken homes*. Their study suggested that family conflicts are often caused by an inability to communicate effectively, which can lead to separation or even divorce. Meanwhile, Priska Adristi's (2023) research highlighted the negative impacts of divorce on children, including effects on motivation and psychological development. While both studies address important aspects of family communication, they do not deeply explore the specific communication patterns between parents and children in the context of *broken home* families or how these patterns directly affect their relationships.

This study aims to identify the factors affecting communication patterns between parents and children in *broken home* families and to provide practical solutions for improving these interactions. The benefits of this research are to offer deeper insights into the importance of effective communication within *broken home* families and to assist parents and relevant parties in developing strategies to improve communication for the well-being and psychological development of children.

Research methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on fundamental issues based on facts collected through in-depth interviews and observations. The purpose of the study was to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information directly from research subjects—children who came from families affected by broken home conditions. The semi-structured interview method used in this research consisted of an interview guide containing a list of questions designed to elicit more detailed information.

Qualitative analysis was conducted after the data had been collected, involving processes such as organizing the data, identifying key points, and drawing conclusions. The resource persons in this study were selected because they belonged to the broken home category, aligning with the research topic. With this background, the resource persons were able to provide relevant and direct perspectives, thereby supporting in-depth data collection in accordance with the focus of the research.

Results and Discussion

Of the two sources we interviewed, both admitted that they had communication problems with their parents. This is the main thing in the study considering that both come from broken homes. The status of the broken home family occurred due to the divorce experienced by their parents. This condition is suspected to be the main factor affecting the disconnection of effective communication between parents and children. The communication barriers experienced by the resource persons reflect the emotional and psychological impact that may arise due to changes in family structure. Therefore, a deep understanding of the dynamics of communication in a broken home family is essential to identify solutions that can improve the relationship between parents and children.

Conversation Orientation

Open Communication in the Family

Based on the answer from Resource Person 1, he experienced difficulties in open communication due to the emergence of a sense of prestige and lack of understanding in expressing feelings (Grey et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Resource Person 2 showed a more flexible attitude and was able to communicate openly, although it depends on the situation at hand (Lohaus et al., 2023). As analysis shows, difficulty being open can disrupt

communication and lead to misunderstandings (Barnes & Olson, as cited in Lohaus et al., 2023). However, the ability to adapt to parents can increase positive interactions, so it is important to be more open, therefore, it is important to improve the ability to communicate more openly in order to be able to improve the interaction between children (Demkowicz et al., 2023).

Overcoming Communication Differences with Parents

Based on the answers from Resource Person 1 and Resource Person 2, it can be concluded that open communication with parents requires a careful approach. It's important to pay attention to a conducive atmosphere and choose the right topics in order to create space for deeper conversations (Géczy et al., 2024; Sadeghi et al., 2020). In addition, awareness of the situation and the need to filter conversations are needed to maintain a harmonious relationship between parents and children. The results of the analysis show that to reduce the gap between generations caused by the lack of interaction between parents and children, an approach in choosing topics of conversation must be carefully addressed (Cao et al., 2023; Zhuang et al., 2025; Sadeghi et al., 2020; Singh & Singh, 2022).

Triggers and Emotional Impacts on Children when Parents are Angry

Based on the answers from Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 2, both showed a careful and empathetic approach in communicating with parents, especially when the parents were in an emotional state (Stifter et al., 2022). They recognize the importance of time and atmosphere in the communication process, and strive to maintain a harmonious relationship with parents. The results of the analysis stated that the causes and emotional impacts on children when parents are angry can be handled with a careful and caring approach in communicating (Branje, 2018). This reflects maturity in feelings and desire to improve communication which emphasizes the importance of caring and good understanding in interacting between individuals in various situations, especially emotional ones (Zhuang et al., 2025).

Parents' Response to the Expression of Children's Opinions and Feelings

Based on the answers from Resource Person 1 and Resource Person 2, it can be concluded that communication between children and parents is influenced by parents' responses to children's opinions and how to manage existing differences (Branje, 2018; Li et al., 2024). Disapproval from parents can cause a fear in children to share, while if parents give a response that listens and understands the emotional state of the child, it can improve the quality of communication between the two (Institute for Family Studies, 2020). The results of the analysis showed that parents' responses to the expression of children's opinions and feelings greatly affected the level of communication in the family (Harold, 2018; Dubow et al., 2016). The open response of the parents reflects the level of openness of communication in the family (Demkowicz et al., 2023; Lunkenheimer et al., 2022; Han et al., 2017; Stifter et al., 2022; Modecki et al., 2021; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022).

Comformity Orientation

Differences in Parents' Communication Openness compared to Friends.

Based on the answers from Resource Person 1 and Resource Person 2, it can be concluded that communication with parents tends to be more limited and formal, while communication with friends takes place more openly and freely. The results of the

analysis found variations in the openness of communication between children and parents with friends, when communicating with parents has a limited and formal tendency. This is due to the norms that govern the course of the interaction. The occurrence of obstacles in communicating with parents is caused by expectations and regulations applied in the family, resulting in limited children in expressing themselves. Meanwhile, communicating with friends in general tends to be more free and transparent so that many things are revealed. Therefore, it is important to improve communication strategies that are more effective in the context of family and friends.

Challenges of Communication with Parents

Based on the answer from Resource Person 1, he had difficulty in questioning the reason behind the quarrel between his parents. To overcome these challenges, Resource Person 1 used the strategy of directly observing the interaction between his parents during fights. Meanwhile, Resource Person 2 faced difficulties when parents were not in good condition to talk to. To overcome this situation, he emphasized the importance of finding the right time to express communication. The results of the analysis showed that there were differences in how to deal with communication challenges with parents. These two strategies illustrate their ability to understand the importance of implementing effective communication strategies (Hafiza, 2018; Kesya, 2024; Priska Adristi, 2023; Ryandini, 2021; Oxianus Sabarua, 2020).

The Impact of Parental Divorce on the Comfort of Communication

Based on the answers from Resource Person 1 and Resource Person 2, it can be concluded that parental divorce results in a very different communication experience for children. Resource person 1 felt comfortable communicating with his mother, while Resource Person 2 experienced significant discomfort in communicating with his parents. The results of the analysis show that the impact of parental divorce can result in different communication experiences for children. It emphasizes the importance of individual relationships and situations in determining the child's response to changes in family structure and activities after divorce.

The Role of Parental Readiness in Encouraging Children's Involvement in Communication

Based on the answers from Resource Person 1 and Resource Person 2, it can be concluded that effective communication between children and parents is highly dependent on parental initiative and openness. When parents actively listen and provide space for discussion, children feel more valued and motivated to participate in conversations. In addition, positive moments and experiences in expressing opinions contribute to the strengthening of emotional relationships and better communication in the family. The results of the analysis show that effective interaction between children and parents requires effort and parental openness where when parents actively listen and provide space for discussion, children feel more valued and motivated to participate in conversations. Based on the analysis that has been presented, it is very important to emphasize that effective communication in a Broken Home family requires a planned and collaborative approach from all family members, especially parents.

CONCLUSION

Effective communication between parents and children in broken home families is essential for supporting children's emotional and social development, as the absence of one parent or divorce often results in significant psychological and social challenges. Communication psychology emphasizes the need to understand the social and psychological context of each interaction, enabling parents to adapt their communication styles to meet their children's emotional needs. Openness, empathy, and self-control are key factors that help reduce misunderstandings and foster trust, allowing children to express themselves freely and feel valued. Strategies such as creating opportunities for open discussion, encouraging active participation, and providing positive feedback can strengthen emotional bonds and promote a supportive family environment. Future research should explore the long-term effects of various family communication interventions on the psychological resilience and social adjustment of children from broken home families.

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