

Interpersonal Communication Between Husband and Wife in Building a Healthy Relationship: A Case Study in Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun, Bandung City

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Abstract

This study discusses the interpersonal communication of married couples in building a healthy relationship by applying five aspects of interpersonal communication: openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positivity. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The subjects were five married couples living in Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun, Bandung City. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and literature studies. The results showed that the five aspects of interpersonal communication were consistently applied by the couples to build a healthy relationship. The Kampung KB program also played a role in creating a supportive environment for positive spousal communication. In conclusion, effective interpersonal communication is the main foundation for a healthy and harmonious marriage.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Communication, Healthy Relationship Married Couples, Kampung KB*

Abstrak.

Penelitian ini membahas komunikasi interpersonal pasangan suami istri dalam membentuk healthy relationship dengan menggunakan lima aspek komunikasi interpersonal, yaitu keterbukaan, empati, dukungan, kesetaraan, dan sikap positif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Subjek penelitian adalah lima pasangan suami istri yang tinggal di Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun, Kota Bandung. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam dan studi pustaka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelima aspek komunikasi interpersonal digunakan secara konsisten oleh pasangan dalam membentuk hubungan yang sehat. Program Kampung KB turut berperan dalam membentuk lingkungan yang mendukung komunikasi positif antar pasangan. Kesimpulannya, komunikasi interpersonal yang efektif menjadi fondasi utama dalam membentuk hubungan pernikahan yang sehat dan harmonis.

Kata kunci: *Komunikasi Interpersonal, Healthy Relationship, Pasangan Suami Istri, Kampung KB*

INTRODUCTION

Family is the smallest unit in society and plays a strategic role in national development. The function of the family is not only as a physical shelter but also as a means of character, social, and emotional development for all its members. In line with this, the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) has initiated efforts to improve the quality of family life through the Quality Family Village program (Kampung KB). This program aims to achieve family resilience through a comprehensive and sustainable approach, encompassing the aspects of education, economy, reproductive health, socio-culture, and affection (BKKBN, 2020).

One realization of this program is the establishment of the Serumpun KB Village in Sindangjaya Village, Mandalajati District, Bandung City. This village was inaugurated on November 28, 2022, as a manifestation of the joint commitment between the government and the community to form healthy and quality families. The acronym of "Serumpun" itself signifies Healthy, Harmonious, Independent, and Valuable, reflecting the vision of family development in the area (Diskominfo Kota Bandung, 2024). The Serumpun KB Village covers the area of 12 RW (neighbourhood units) and 60 RT (neighbourhood groups), with a total of 3,521 family heads and a population of approximately 14,295 people, including 2,300 couples of childbearing age (PUS) who are the focus of family development (BKKBN, 2020).

The vision of Serumpun KB Village is to realize small, healthy, prosperous, creative, and quality families (Diskominfo Kota Bandung, 2024). To achieve this goal, it is essential to establish a strong foundation first. Husbands and wives play the main role in supporting the realization of quality families. Effective communication is necessary in nurturing household relationships. A sense of tolerance, mutual understanding, care, affection, and love for one another are the main pillars of a harmonious relationship. A strong foundation in communication will prevent prolonged conflicts and disputes, so husbands and wives can avoid various temptations and obstacles. Through the marriage process, husbands and wives can build a harmonious household.

To improve family quality, the Serumpun KB Village has various work programs that will support the sustainability of this program, such as religious working groups, education working groups, environmental working groups, economic working groups, reproductive working groups, socio-cultural working groups, love working groups, and protection working groups. Involvement and collaboration among various sides are supporting factors for the smooth implementation of the KKBP (Population, Family Planning, and Family Development) program, with assistance from various parts of society as well as government and non-government sectors. The high level of community participation, averaging 63%, along with comprehensive supporting programs to create family resilience, such as BKB, BKL, BKR, UPPKA, PIK R, and others, are reasons for the researcher to conduct research in the Serumpun KB Village (BKKBN, 2020).

Efforts to strengthen families through this program are highly relevant due to the high divorce rates in Indonesia. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), in 2023, there were 463,654 recorded divorce cases, and that number makes Indonesia to be the country with the highest divorce rate in the Asia-Pacific region (GoodStats, 2024). West Java Province contributes the largest share with 102,280 cases, or about 22% of the national total, while Bandung City ranks sixth with 5,861 divorce cases. Interestingly, the majority of these divorces are initiated by wives, accounting for 76%, indicating a shift in the dynamics of roles and awareness within households (Databoks, 2024).

The primary cause of divorce in Indonesia is disputes and conflicts within households, accounting for 54.3%, followed by economic factors (23.29%), abandonment by one side (7.4%), domestic violence (1.1%), and other factors such as alcoholism and gambling (Databoks, 2024). These disputes are not only related to differences in principles or values but they are often rooted in poor communication between spouses. Lack of openness, honesty, and trust can trigger prolonged conflicts that are difficult to resolve.

In this context, interpersonal communication becomes a key component in building and maintaining a healthy marital relationship. According to Devito (2022), interpersonal

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communication is the process of conveying messages verbally and nonverbally between two or more people, with the opportunity for direct feedback. Devito also identifies five main elements of effective interpersonal communication: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. These five elements are essential foundations for creating a harmonious, equitable, and sustainable husband-wife relationship.

A healthy relationship in a household does not mean to be free from conflict, but it reflects to the couple's ability to resolve differences wisely, listen to each other, and respect each other's feelings and needs. In practice, couples with good interpersonal communication tend to be more open to compromise, have better ability to express affection, and be more prepared to face household challenges. Conversely, couples who fail to establish healthy communication often experience an accumulation of unresolved conflicts that lead to separation.

The development of quality families can only be achieved if communication among family members, especially between husbands and wives, runs effectively (Saputra, Mahaputra, & Wala, 2024). Communication serves as an important medium for conveying hopes, building commitments, resolving conflicts, and fostering emotional intimacy. Therefore, examining interpersonal communication between husbands and wives in forming a healthy marital relationship is crucial to support the success of family development programs.

Thus, this study aims to explore deeply about how interpersonal communication practices are carried out by husbands and wives in the Serumpun KB Village, as well as the role of this communication in creating and maintaining a healthy marital relationship. The research focuses on the communication strategies used, the obstacles faced, and their impact on household harmony, in order to support the achievement of quality families as envisioned in the KB Village program.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study method. A qualitative approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to understand social phenomena deeply through the exploration of meanings, interactions, and the subjective experiences of informants (Creswell, 2015). With this approach, the researcher can present data in a comprehensive narrative form that aligns with the natural context.

The researcher selected the research location in the Quality Family Village (KB) Serumpun, Sindangjaya Village, Bandung City, as this area represents a community-based family empowerment program. The research subjects were purposively selected based on criteria of couples who have been married for more than five years, reside in the Serumpun KB Village, and are active in family empowerment activities. After determining the subjects, the researcher established initial communication with potential informants to explain the purpose and scope of the research. Subsequently, the researcher scheduled interview sessions based on the informants' availability and prepared a semi-structured interview guide containing open-ended questions regarding interpersonal communication practices in the daily lives of husbands and wives. The entire process was conducted in person while adhering to research ethics, such as maintaining the confidentiality of identities and obtaining informed consent from informants before data collection.

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews and literature studies (Sugiyono, 2018). For data analysis, the researcher used the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion

drawing. All obtained data were then coded and analysed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to aspects of interpersonal communication (Miles et al., 2014). Data triangulation techniques were employed to ensure data validity, with the researcher conducting member checks by confirming findings with the relevant informants (Moleong, 2021).

Table 1. Informant Profile

Name		Age		Years of Marriage	Occupation	
Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife		Husband	Wife
Arhan	Indah	53 years old	45 years old	23 years	Entrepreneur	Housewife
Badri	Inayah	59 years old	59 years old	30 years	Entrepreneur	Housewife
Dani	Diana	34 years old	34 years old	10 years	Entrepreneur	Entrepreneur
Madani	Damiya	37 years old	37 years old	13 years	Contractor	Housewife
Anto	Larisa	51 years old	47 years old	21 years	Private Employee	Housewife

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the main findings from the field, which is related to theories of interpersonal communication, particularly the theory of self-disclosure and the five indicators of effective communication according to Devito (2022): openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positivity. The findings are discussed thematically to illustrate how communication in household life plays a role in maintaining harmony, preventing conflict, and strengthening the emotional bonding between husband and wife.

1. Openness in Husband-Wife Communication

Based on interviews with informants, openness (self-disclosure) is recognized as a fundamental foundation for building household harmony. Larisa emphasizes the importance of openness as a top priority in marital relationships, as it allows couples to resolve the problems together. In her view, openness is essential for creating healthy communication between husband and wife.

However, informants like Anto and Dani indicate that openness needs to be balanced with certain boundaries. Anto asserts that although he keeps the value of openness, it does not mean that all aspects of life need to be opened, especially personal finances and past experiences. Furthermore, that case need to be discussed more in detail. Dani shares a similar perspective, stating that openness should cover important and relevant matters in household life, such as family conditions, finances, and friendships. For them, openness is about proportional honesty, not sharing all information without discretion.

Other informants, such as Badri and Inayah, highlight that openness is not only a mechanism for conflict resolution but also a symbol of emotional closeness among family members. They believe that discussing every problem, no matter how small it is, is a form of appreciation and care in the relationship. This sentiment is echoed by Damiya and Madani, who view openness as a foundation for communication not only with the partners but also with the children.

Several informants emphasize the importance of choosing the right time for self-disclosure. Diana, for instance, considers the time before going to bed as an ideal moment for

sharing stories. This view is also supported by Dani and Anto, who believe that the timing of discussions significantly affects communication effectiveness. Larisa even prefers to speak directly and “to the point”, while still considering her partner's situation.

2. Empathy in Daily Interactions Between Husband and Wife

In household life, empathy plays a central role in forming healthy and deep communication. Based on interview results, informants emphasize that the ability to feel and understand their partner's emotions is the foundation of a harmonious relationship. Empathy is not just about listening, but it also involves responding to feelings in a supportive and calming manner.

Difficult economic situations often create emotional pressure within households. However, couples like Madani and Damiya demonstrate that patience and empathy can reduce the potential conflicts. They understand each other, compromise, and choose to maintain emotional balance to keep the situation of home conducive. Anto and Larisa also express empathy through spirituality, such as performing prayers together to calm emotions and give space when feelings get high emotional so that discussions can be conducted more calmly.

Each couple shows unique ways of expressing empathy. Dani, for example, chooses to listen and facilitate his wife's emotional expression before seeking solutions. Diana adopts a loving approach by creating a comfortable atmosphere before discussing issues, such as cooking her husband's favourite meal. This attitude reflects that empathy can also be manifested through concrete actions, not just verbal expressions.

Empathy is also expressed through consistent affection. Madani and Damiya exemplify the importance of warmth in relationships through small gestures like hugs, kisses, and humour. An open and relaxed communication style creates a pleasant home atmosphere and encourages children to be more open with their parents. It shows that consistent empathy can foster a positive communication culture within the family.

3. Supportiveness Provided by Husband and Wife

Emotional support is a key element in building and maintaining household harmony. Informants emphasize the importance of mutual moral support in daily life. Anto, for instance, fully supports his wife in running the family business, even though they must sacrifice time with their children. For Anto, involvement in decision-making processes and providing space for his partner to grow are concrete ways of emotional support.

Additionally, instrumental support in the form of cooperation in domestic tasks also looks from the dynamics of various couples. In the household of Arhan and Indah, the sharing of role is more collective. They work together in producing homemade food without rigid task assignments. This approach shows that the flexible cooperation and mutual assistance contribute to household harmony, especially in the context of the family economy which is built together. Support in child-caring is also an important aspect of healthy household relationships. Couples like Madani and Damiya demonstrate that the responsibility of educating children is not solely handled by the mother but also involves active participation from the father.

Financial support is not always rigid, it depends on the family's dynamics and conditions. Madani, for example, gives his wife the freedom to use money without obligating her to explain its use in detail, as long as it is used for a positive context. Conversely, Badri entrusts almost all

of his income to Inayah for management to show his full trust amid economic limitations due to unstable employment.

4. Application of the Concept of Equality in Daily Communication Between Husband and Wife

Interview results show that the concept of equality in households which is understood and applied by couples in the Quality Family Village of Serumpun is not necessarily in the form of identical role distribution but in form of appreciating each other's contributions. Anto emphasizes that men and women hold equal positions in the eyes of God, even though their responsibilities are different. According to him, equality in the household is not about who does something but how partners respect each other's roles.

Equality in the household is also reflected through joint participation in decision-making processes. Dani states that although he feels responsible as the head of the family, he still involves his wife in decision considerations. Diana adds that small decisions in daily life, such as determining the menu, can be made independently for efficiency, while larger decisions still require discussion.

Madani highlights the importance of mutual agreement in personal decisions, such as purchasing a vehicle. He prefers to discuss it with his wife first rather than making unilateral decisions. He believes that it is one of the ways to respect and maintain mutual comfort. Damiya confirms by emphasizing that they always make decisions together to maintain balance and harmony in their household.

5. Expression of Positivity in Husband-Wife Communication

One prominent form of positivity is mutual respect for each other's roles in the household. Larisa emphasizes that respecting her husband as the primary decision-maker is a form of respect that she shows, and Anto responds with a similar attitude by involving his wife in various decisions through discussion. Arhan and Indah demonstrate appreciation by allowing freedom to do activity outside the home, as long as communication and responsibilities are maintained. Similarly, Badri expresses the importance of trust and clear communication as the foundation for comfort when his wife does activities outside.

A positive attitude is also manifested through appreciation for one's partner. Anto shows that simple expressions like saying "thank you" for small things such as cooking, reminding, or helping can create a more supportive atmosphere. For Dani, appreciation is a way to show care and encourage his partner to continue doing positive things.

6. Motivation of Husband and Wife to Participate in *Program Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun* (the Quality Family Village Program of Serumpun)

The motivation of husband and wife to participate in *Program Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun* (Quality Family Village Program of Serumpun) is diverse, but it is generally rooted in the desire to improve the quality of family relationships. This program is seen as an educational tool that helps strengthen communication, roles, and emotional bonding among family members, particularly between husband and wife.

Anto, one of the informants, states that his motivation comes from the awareness of the importance of sharing household responsibilities. He views his involvement in domestic work as

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a form of appreciation and gratitude towards his wife. Additionally, he feels that this program helps him learn about patience and sincerity, which are important qualities in family life. His wife, Larisa, also emphasizes the importance of this program in building a harmonious family and improving communication, especially in the context of their long-distance relationship (LDR).

Most informants hope that *Program Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun* (Quality Family Village Program of Serumpun) can continue to develop and reach more families. They see that this program is not only a place to learn but also a platform for family transformation, which makes each member can understand, support, and grow together in facing household challenges.

DISCUSSION

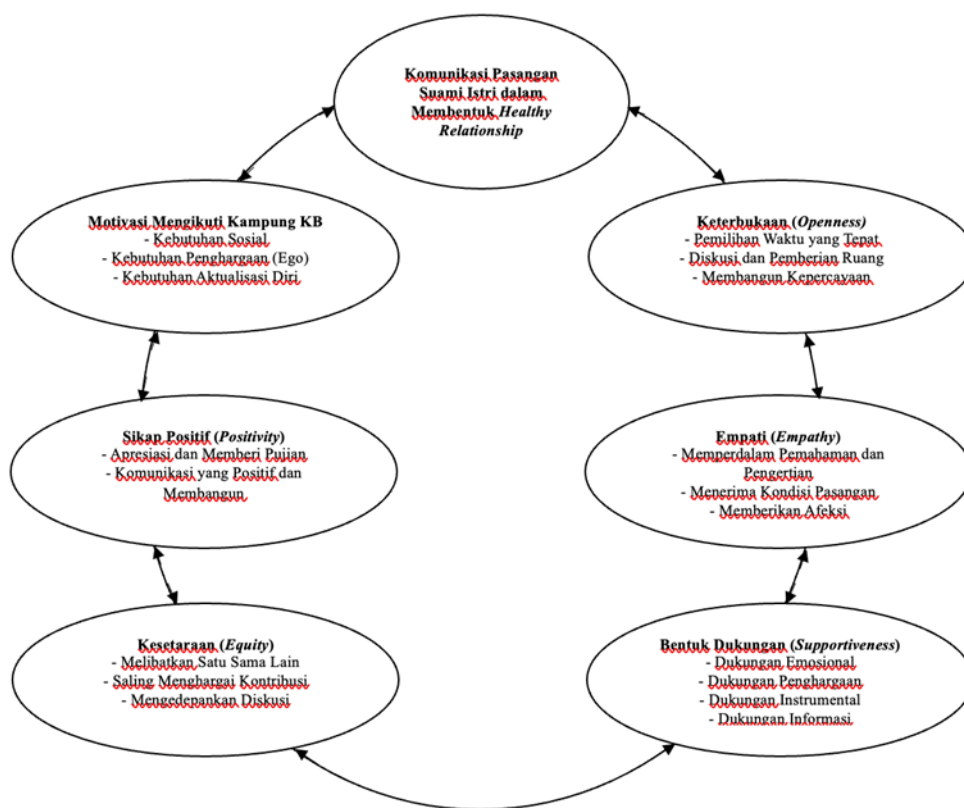


Figure 1. Communication Model of Husband and Wife in Forming a Healthy Relationship in *Program Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun* (Quality Family Village Program of Serumpun)

In this section, the research findings indicate that open communication plays a crucial role in creating emotional support and strengthening relationships within the household. As explained by Verderber and MacGeorge (2016), family communication serves as a means to build recognition and support among family members. In an interview with Inayah, open communication is seen as an effective preventive way to avoid larger conflicts.

Healthy communication also reflects the application of the ASPIRE principles (Agency, Safety, Positivity, Inclusion, Respect, Equity) (Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021). The principle of Agency is appeared in the appropriate timing for discussions, as described by Anto in his role as

the head of the family. Diana illustrates the importance of Positivity through the habit of sharing some stories before bedtime. Arhan applies the principle of Inclusion by involving children in family conversations. Dani and Diana reflect the principle of Respect by choosing the right time for discussions. Finally, Equity is reflected in how Madani and Damiya discuss important decisions together, balancing privacy and openness.

These findings are consistent with Devito (2022), who states that empathy in interpersonal communication helps partners understand the world from each other's perspectives. Baron and Branscombe (2019) describe two components of empathy: affective and cognitive. Affective empathy is appeared in the relationship between Madani and Damiya, who support each other amid economic difficulties. Meanwhile, cognitive empathy is reflected in Diana's attitude of giving Dani space when he is stressed. Larisa also demonstrates cognitive empathy by waiting for a conducive time to discuss any problem with Anto.

This empathetic approach creates supportive communication and minimizes the conflict. As explained by Knapp et al. (2014), supportive communication fosters a sense of being respected and emotionally accepted. Damiya responds to Madani's emotional pressure with patience and understanding, reflecting the emotional validation. Arhan and Indah also show a deep understanding of each other's communication patterns. Anto and Larisa use a spiritual approach to manage emotions, showing empathy through joint prayers before discussions. Empathy also strengthens openness or self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, in West & Turner, 2018), which allows partners to share feelings and experiences honestly. Madani and Damiya exhibit strong self-disclosure by openly discussing their economic situation, creating mutual trust and understanding.

Social support in marriage can be viewed through four aspects according to Sarafino et al. (2020): emotional support, appreciation, instrumental support, and informational support. Emotional support is reflected in the relationship between Anto and Larisa, who reinforce each other's decisions. Appreciation support is seen in Dani's praise for his wife's understanding during difficult times and Arhan's appreciation for his wife's outdoor activities. Instrumental support is exemplified by Dani and Diana, who share household tasks flexibly. Informational support is demonstrated by Madani and Damiya, as well as Anto and Larisa, through their openness in financial management.

Family communication patterns also play a significant role in maintaining equality. Devito (2022) categorizes communication patterns into four types, and two patterns found in this study are the Equality Pattern and the Balance Split Pattern. The Equality Pattern is seen in the relationships of Anto and Larisa, as well as Madani and Damiya, who respect the privacy and share important decisions together. The Balance Split Pattern is seen in the relationships of Dani and Diana, as well as Badri and Inayah, who divide roles based on abilities while still respecting each other.

The motivation to participate in *Kampung Keluarga Berkualitas Serumpun* (Quality Family Village of Serumpun) is rooted in various levels of needs according to Maslow's theory (Bari & Hidayat, 2022). Anto and Larisa demonstrate social and esteem needs, while Dani and Diana are driven by the need to enhance emotional closeness. Arhan and Indah reflect social needs and personal development, while Badri and Inayah, as well as Madani and Damiya, reflect self-actualization through learning and improving relationships.

CONCLUSION

Effective interpersonal communication is the key to create a harmonious household in the Quality Family Village Serumpun. The five indicators of effective communication, such as openness, empathy, supportiveness, equality, and positivity, complement one another in maintaining emotional closeness and preventing conflicts between husband and wife. Openness is practiced proportionally by considering the emotional situation of the partner, while empathy is manifested in emotional understanding and concrete actions that strengthen mutual care.

Additionally, the forms of support provided by partners, such as in the emotional, instrumental, financial, or informational aspects, demonstrate a dynamic of flexible cooperation and mutual respect. Equality is not always interpreted as identical role distribution but it serves as appreciation for contributions and joint decision-making. The Quality Family Village Program also serves as an educational and reflective platform that helps couples to develop healthy and supportive communication, in line with social needs and self-actualization. These findings emphasize that empathetic, open, and respectful communication is an essential foundation for building strong and harmonious families.

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