



Explaining Parent-Child Relationship During The Covid-19 Pandemic in Semarang City

Agustin Erna Fatmasari^{1*}, Niken Fatimah Nurhayati²

Universitas Diponegoro Semarang, Indonesia

¹agustinerna@lecturer.undip.ac.id, ²niken.fatimah@gmail.com

*Correspondence

Abstract

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The relationship with parents is one source of happiness and psychological well-being for children. The impact of the relationship is undoubtedly essential for children in dealing with rapid changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to explain the parent-child relationship during the COVID-19 pandemic in Semarang. The method used in this study is indigenous psychology with a grounded theory approach. The data retrieval technique used is purposive sampling by filling out the open-ended questionnaire. A total of 207 emerging adult children aged 17-23 suitable for the inclusion criteria were willing to participate in this study. The study found that the parent-child relationship was getting closer during the COVID-19 pandemic in Semarang for respondents who were close before the pandemic. However, there has been no change in parents and children who have a distant relationship since before the pandemic. This study also indicates that communication, giving support, father's character, togetherness, loving, and thinking of fathers as role models are forms of the father-child relationship. Moreover, the forms with their mothers are indicated by the communication, loving, togetherness, mother's character, and giving support.

INTRODUCTION

Humans, as social creatures, are inseparable from others. They will constantly interact, socialize, and communicate with others. Relationships with others are developed through intensive interaction and communication. Spradley and McCurdy (2004) defined a relationship as an association between individuals over a relatively long period. The consistent interaction pattern between individuals then creates something called a relational pattern. Some types of relationships include a spousal relationship, a friendship, a coworker relationship, a neighbor relationship, and a family relationship (Qonitatin, Fatiurohman, Helmi, & Kartowagiran, 2020). However, one of the most important relationships, which is formed since early life, is that between parents and children.

The relationship between parents and their children during the emerging adult development stage will be the main topic of this research. An emerging adult is defined as an individual between 18 and 25. In the emerging adult period, individuals are in a transitional phase where they can no longer be considered adolescents but also can not be

considered young adults (Arnett, 2007). Emerging adults have a developmental task to explore and make critical life decisions that require parental support and trust (Arnett, 2013). In the relationship between parents and emerging adults, a pattern of interaction is developed which lasts for a long time and continues (Qonitatin et al., 2020). The parent and emerging adult relationship can be measured by looking at the aspects of the parents and adolescents relationship described by Qonitatin et al. (2020), including support, power, and conflict. The aspect of the parent-adolescent relationship is that support means parents play their part in supporting their children; power means exercising control over their children; and conflict means parents may sometimes have disputes with their children.

In early 2020, the coronavirus spread rapidly and massively, triggering a worldwide pandemic that affected Indonesia (Annur, 2021). As a result, the government instructed that all activities be carried out remotely. This phenomenon impacted the relationship between parents and children, one of them being students in emerging adulthood returning to their hometown and attending online classes from their homes. Emerging adults, who once moved out of town to pursue higher education, returned to their homes again (Putri, Rahayu, & Khasanah, 2021).

Parents' relationships with their emerging adult children develop best when they can be open to each other (Desmita, 2017). Parenting quality became the primary influence on the psychological well-being of children. Therefore, they truly need the role of their parents to accompany them to adapt and overcome the challenge of the pandemic. The better parents play their part, the higher the psychological well-being of the children (Sa'adah, 2017).

The pandemic has brought forth many changes that parents and emerging adult children must adapt to, which can positively and negatively impact their relationships. On the positive side, the pandemic may present the opportunity to foster a closer relationship between them and address problems collectively. The downside is that it may increase the likelihood of conflict and isolation because family members must adjust to new ways of working, learning, and entertaining themselves, as well as be alert for potential infections and worry about financial hardships brought on by the pandemic (Gunther-Bel, C. et al., 2020).

College students may experience both physical and psychological problems from the pandemic. According to Gunawan and Bintari (2021), unpleasant events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress and affect psychological well-being. As a result, communication becomes crucial for all family members at home to share their feelings, opinions, and concerns. It could enhance the frequency of parent-child interactions. Students who previously spent more time interacting with their peers, teachers, or the college community start spending more time with family at home. The parent-child relationship within the family may change due to this condition. Due to social restrictions, many activities must be completed at home, undoubtedly impacting college

students' quality of parent-child relationships (Putri, Rahayu, & Khasanah, 2021).

The parent-child relationship develops best when they can be open to each other (Desmita, 2017). Relationships are best formed when communication is maintained. Communication is effective when both sender and receiver share a similar understanding of the message (Zolten, Kristin & Nicholas, 2018). Communication is also effective when the message is understandable, and there is voluntary reciprocity. Effective communication is crucial in the interactions between parents and children. A good parent-child relationship can develop with open and effective communication (Zolten & Long, 2018).

Open communication signifies the closeness and quality of parent-child relationships (Martiani, Lestari & Hertinjung, 2021). Intensive parent-adolescent communication indicates a more positive relationship (Moore et al., 2004). Effective communication makes children feel more open to sharing with their parents. The precise delivery of messages, empathy, active listening, support, and problem-solving are positive communication characteristics (Riesch et al., 2003). Openness and a quality relationship between parents and children are signs of good communication (Goodman et al., 2019). Parents can demonstrate openness by allowing their children to develop perspective-taking abilities, reflect on moral issues, and assist when needed (Lestari, 2013). In addition, children can also create their ability to listen, making them more empathetic and sensitive to understanding others, including their parents (McLaren & Sillars, 2020).

Previous studies have outlined the importance of open communication with family members. Being open can make it easier for parents and children to understand each other's needs and desires. Pursuing effective communication involves more than one party; parents and children both play a part and bear responsibility for establishing it. However, there may be some issues and difficulties when implementing effective communication. According to Kinanti (2018), the difference between the ideal values taught by previous generations and the reality experienced by current generations is the biggest obstacle parents face in communicating with their children. Ineffective communication can cause insecurity due to the different mindsets of parents and children, resulting in conflict. Disagreements can occur when parents cannot understand and adapt to the needs of the youth.

Ineffective communication can result in a poor relationship between parents and children due to a lack of mutual trust. Children are insecure about sharing a problem with their parents and are dissatisfied with the response (Martiani, Lestari & Hertinjung, 2021). In addition, it may result in their deviance and strained connections between parents and children (McLaren & Sillars, 2020). Furthermore, poor communication can result when parents only discuss children's flaws. Children often have their potential overlooked, which causes them to become more reclusive and worsens their relationship with their parents (Goodman et al., 2019).

Parents must learn how to communicate effectively to avoid misunderstandings, which could damage their relationship with their children and cause difficulty maintaining control over them when they are not at home (Martiani, Lestari & Hertinjung, 2021). Concerns about the relationship between parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic have been raised in light of the description above. The research questions are how is the parent-child relationship during the COVID-19 pandemic in Semarang City? Does social restriction lead to a closer relationship, or on the other hand, does it lead to more conflict? What is the form of a child's relationship with their father and mother?

METHOD

This research uses indigenous psychology with a grounded theory approach. This approach encourages researchers to understand psychological phenomena according to the context (Kim et al., 2010). Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research methods that focuses on building a conceptual or theoretical framework through inductive analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). This approach is expected to assist researchers in constructing forms of parent-children closeness during the COVID-19 pandemic in Semarang and the different forms of intimacy between children and their mothers or fathers.

The researchers selected respondents with a purposive sampling technique suitable for the inclusion criteria. Based on the inclusion criteria, 207 emerging adult children aged 17-23 were willing to be respondents and fill out the questionnaire. The researcher gave an online questionnaire consisting of informed consent, respondent's identity, and questions. Respondents were provided informed consent as a form of willingness to be consciously involved in research. Identity is needed to cross-check whether the respondent fits the inclusion criteria. The data analysis technique in this study uses grounded theory developed by Corbin and Strauss (in Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). Open coding, which categorizes phenomena based on questionnaire responses, was the first step in data processing. The second step was to create an axial coding in which researchers connected the categorization from open coding into the same characteristics. The third step was creating selective coding, in which researchers formulate main categories by connecting categories obtained from the axial coding stage (Budiasih, 2014).

RESULT

The analyzed data found that 112 or 54,1% of the respondents stated they have a close relationship with their fathers. The relationship between the child and their fathers is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1
The Form of Father-Child Relationship

Selective Coding	Axial Coding	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Close	Communication	47	22,7%	112	54,1%
	Giving Support	21	10,1%		
	Character	18	8,7%		
	Togetherness	13	6,3%		
	Loving	7	3,4%		
	Role model	6	2,9%		
Distant	Communication	22	10,6%	87	42%
	Character	20	9,7%		
	Togetherness	17	8,2%		
	Dispute	16	7,7%		
	No reason	12	5,8%		
Other	Passed away	8	3,9%	8	3,9%
Total		207	100%	207	100%

As shown in Table 1, a close relationship with the father is indicated by communication (22,7%), support (10,1%), good character or trait (8,7%), togetherness (6,3%), loving (3,4%), and father as a role model (2,9%). The first form of a close relationship between children and father is by expressing communication through mutual openness, sharing of stories, maintaining contact even though the children no longer reside at home, and viewing the father as a confidant with whom to share stories and worries. Second, the kind of support the father provides—such as a father who never fails to encourage, a supportive father who offers suggestions and counsel, and a father who supports his child's dreams—indicates a close relationship with the father. Thirdly, the characteristics or traits of a father, such as being kind, humorous, and responsible, make the children has a close relationship with their father. Fourth, a close relationship with the father is demonstrated by togetherness. Togetherness develops due to growing up close, staying at home more frequently due to the pandemic, and cracking jokes often. Fifth, a loving component to a close father-children relationship exists. According to the respondents, loving includes a father's attention shown through his actions, accompaniment and protection, and constant presence when his child needs him. Last but not least, a child who has a close relationship with their father view their father as role model and, when they grow up, aspire to be like their father, who loves his family and children.

The following data analysis concerns the close relationship between children and their mothers. Results show that 154 or 74,3% of the respondents report having a close relationship with their mothers. Table 2 shows the mother-children relationship during the pandemic. Respondents stated that communication (38,2%), loving (14%), togetherness (13,1%), good character or trait (4,8%), and support (4,3%) are signs of a close relationship with their mother. According to data, communication is the most significant contributor to whether a relationship between the child and their mother is close. Respondents varied in their answers on the kind of communication to make a close relationship with their mother, one of them being the mother as their best friend with whom they can share anything. Another factor contributing to their relationship's strength is regular interaction and openness during the pandemic.

As seen in Table 2, communication indicates the distant relationship between mother and children, with a percentage of 10,1%. When they attempted to be open, the respondents claimed that the mother's response fell short of what they had expected. The mother's inability to understand her children also makes them feel dejected. Respondents said it is challenging to be open and share stories with their mothers, which results in them being distant. They added that not every problem could be discussed with their mothers, especially the more personal ones. Even so, respondents still communicate with their mothers, but there is just no openness.

Some respondents stated since they are spending more time at home during the pandemic, they feel closer to their mothers. However, they feel distant or indifferent regarding their relationship with their father during the pandemic. The respondent's statement is provided below:

“...my relationship with my mother is very close because every day I am with my mother at home. My mother is a housewife ...” (Respondent with code S20).

Another respondent also felt closer to their mother because their father is busy at work. Below is a respondent's statement:

“...my relationship with father is close, but we rarely communicate because he is swamped...” (Respondent with code S2).

Another is also said to feel very attached to the mother but not the father due to his lack of openness and their different gender. The respondent's statement is provided below:

“My relationship with father is decent but not particularly close...However, I feel that my father is the kind of person who can't fully accept my stories. As we all know, a father is usually more reserved than a mother. In addition, a father is also a man I think cannot quite feel what I experience as a girl....”

Table 2
The Form of Mother-Child Relationship

Selective Coding	Axial Coding	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Close	Communication	79	38,2 %	154	74,4 %
	Loving	29	14 %		
	Togetherness	27	13,1 %		
	Trait/Character	10	4,8 %		
	Giving support	9	4,3 %		
Distant	Communication	21	10,1 %	49	23,7 %
	Dispute	15	7,2 %		
	Togetherness	10	4,8 %		
	Trait/Character	3	1,6 %		
Other	Passed away	4	1,9 %	4	1,9 %
Total		207	100%	207	100%

DISCUSSION

Research findings explain the reasons for having a close or distant relationship between children and their mother or father. As seen in Tables 1 and 2, communication explains whether a relationship between children and their parents is close. This finding aligns with Mary, Hesse, and Kaplan (2005) that communication with adequate intensity and quality will create a close relationship between parent and child. Communication takes place in daily life when interacting with other people. A close relationship is formed through the emotional connection with an older person in our immediate environment who protects, attends to, and maintains closeness. Communication indicates the closeness between children and their parents. One of the signs of a quality relationship is adolescents' willingness to communicate with their parents (Shek, 2006). Good communication can make children open up, and parents can understand and provide a sense of security to their children (Main et al., 2018). After all, open communication is a sign of closeness (Martiani, Lestari & Hertinjung, 2021).

Research conducted by Crocetti and Meeus (2014) found that communication is the primary key to establishing relationships between children and parents. A positive communication style between children and parents will foster a desire for ongoing communication. This research shows that children who are growing up will prefer to spend time with their parents to communicate about their lives, provided that the relationship between children and their parents has been established positively from the beginning and parents do not impose many restrictions on their children (Crocetti &

Meeus, 2014).

Next, the indicator of a close relationship between children and their fathers is being supportive, while a close relationship with their mothers is shown to be loving. The quality of a good relationship is seen through the functioning of critical social supports, such as giving attention, helping, acknowledging, and assisting. Loving is manifested by parents' attention (Widiastuti & Widjaja, 2004). In the Javanese culture, a father has a central role in *asah* (honing), while a mother is responsible for *asih* (loving) and *asuh* (nurturing) (Hakim, Thontowi, et al., 2012). This Javanese culture aligns with research, which reveals that the relationship between mothers and children refers to the emotional side, such as providing generous support. In contrast, the relationship between fathers and children is more focused on problem-solving, where these two types will affect closeness and impact children's emotional problems (Szkody, Rogers, & McKinney, 2020).

A close father-children relationship is shown to have an emotional bond and attachment. According to respondents, the pandemic brought a change as the father's presence at home brought their relationship closer. The limitation of outdoor activity made children spend more time at home with their fathers. Furthermore, the close relationship helped them to cope with the adversity of the pandemic. This finding aligns with Widiastuti and Widjaja (2004) that a quality, warm, and deep relationship with parents can help children cope with the changing conditions during the pandemic. Parent-child relationships are one of the social relations they developed during the pandemic. A positive parent-child relationship may improve a child's psychological well-being during the pandemic. When child's families and immediate environments are filled with happiness, one of which is their relationship with their father, psychological well-being can be attained (Karimah & Frieda, 2017). The family role influences a child's psychological well-being and happiness over time (Nayana, 2013).

In addition to communication, characteristic of a close father-child relationship are supportive, likable character, viewing the father as a loving person and a role model. Compared with the findings of Budyatna and Garniem (2011), a close father-child relationship can be seen from intimacy in the relationship, such as spending time together, love and trust, openness, and responsibility. Additional forms of a close father-child relationship found in this research are those of fathers who are thought to be supportive, role models of children, and have good characteristics. A close relationship can manifest by doing activities together, having positive feelings, relying on each other, being open and trusting, and giving each additional time. On the other hand, if such things are not realized, it may cause their relationship to be distant due to a view of the father's character as indifferent, stiff, authoritative, or even harsh, making the child uncomfortable. As a result, there is no togetherness, and they rarely meet or spend time with each other.

Another interesting finding is that children consider their father a role model in the close relationship between father and child, but this did not come out in the relationship with their mother. According to Parmanti and Purnamasari (2015), a father's

role in the family is to be a teacher and role model for his child. A father has to fulfill his child's needs in the future by being a good role model for his child. If done well, this can foster closeness between father and child. Therefore, a child that views their father as a role model indicates a close relationship.

However, communication also accounts for 10.6% of distant father-child relationships. No communication, a tenuous connection, rarely initiating a conversation, one-sided communication, and a lack of openness to each other are all forms of communication in a distant relationship. The father's character accounts for 9.7% of the father-child relationship to be distant. The mentioned unfavored characters were harsh, authoritative, stiff, indifferent, quiet, and irritable. Next, a low level of togetherness accounts for 8.2% of a father-child relationship being distant, characterized by infrequent time together, a very formal relationship, awkwardness, and stiffness. While the child and their fathers meet more frequently during the pandemic, this does not guarantee their interaction increases either. Lastly, 7.7% of a distant father-child relationship is characterized by disagreement or conflict with the father. Respondents mentioned having frequent quarrels with their fathers, a strained relationship, the father's bad behavior, the father's uncaring, children having pain in the past, and hatred because of the father's attitude changed and the father's divorce.

The following data analysis focuses on the close mother-child relationship. 154 or 74,3% of the respondents reported having a close relationship with their mothers during the pandemic. As shown in Table 2, communication, loving, togetherness, good mother's characters or traits, and support from the mother are indicators of a close mother-child relationship. Loving is an indicator of a close mother-child relationship. Reciprocal love between mother and children exemplifies a good relationship. According to Widiastuti dan Widjaja (2004), good relationship quality can be seen through essential social supports, such as giving attention, helping, acknowledging, and assisting. Loving each other can be a way to improve relationship quality.

Due to the social limitations imposed due to the pandemic, more time was spent at home, which offered opportunities to strengthen familial bonds. Based on Amani's (2021) research findings, the quality of attachment between a mother and a child has several implications: improved self-esteem and well-being and reduced emotional and behavioral disorders. In addition, an intense attachment can strengthen the bonds in a family (Triwardhani & Chaerowati, 2019). Walsh (2012) found that interaction in the family played a significant role in every member's growth and psychological well-being. During the pandemic, the emotional support that parents and children give each other has a positive impact and helps each family member deal with the crisis (Lateef, Alaggia, & Collin, 2021). This emotional support involves interactions between parents and children, such as doing activities or discussing at home. This finding suggests that interaction can strengthen their relationship and improve psychological well-being.

As shown in Table 2, communication between children and their mothers also

indicates a distant relationship, with a percentage of 10,1%. When they attempted to be open, the respondents claimed that the mother's response fell short of what they had expected. The mother's inability to understand her children also makes them feel dejected. Respondents said it is challenging to be open and share stories with the mother, which results in a distant relationship. They added that not every problem could be discussed with their mothers, especially the more personal ones. Even so, respondents still communicate with their mothers, but there is just no openness.

Secondly, a distant mother-child relationship is indicated by the presence of dispute or conflict, with a percentage of 7,2%. Respondents say they feel like unwanted children, are frequently cornered, feel restrained, have frequent arguments, and have experienced trauma. They also claimed that their relationship with their mother is stiff and constrained. Conflicts can arise in the relationship between mothers and children. According to Magdalena (2006), mother-child conflicts are brought on by various things, including differences in values, interests, and ideologies. The relationship may worsen if disputes are unresolved. There is a tendency for mothers to evaluate their children negatively, and paradoxically, that causes children to display more negative behaviors. That condition may worsen the conflict and relationship (Saputra & Shanti, 2019).

A strained relationship and conflict may result from a distant mother-children relationship. According to Januarti (2013), interference in communication, disagreements, and arguments can lead to conflict between parents and children. When building a relationship, communication becomes crucial and must be considered.

Third, togetherness (4,8%) is not developed because the mother is too busy to spend time together. The mother, who does not live in the same house and seldom meets her children, causes them to feel awkward with their mother. Fourth, a distant relationship between children and their mothers is caused by the unfavoured characteristics of the mother (1,6%), such as being harsh and authoritative.

The poor relationship between mothers and children can adversely affect adolescents' psychological well-being. Adolescents with negative family functioning—being not supportive or having a history of conflict—may have low psychological well-being (Nayana, 2013). Research shows that mothers with psychological problems will form negative parenting behavior patterns, increasing insecurity levels, and poor attachment between mothers and children (Walker & McKinney, 2015). Adolescents' psychological state can be improved through their positive relationships with their families. On the contrary, low levels of psychological well-being can result from dysfunctional family interaction (Stanescu & Romer, 2011; Ghamari, 2012). The quality of the mother-child relationship can indicate whether or not they are close. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the relationship between the emerging adult child and their mothers. A positive relationship during the pandemic can bring mothers and children closer. However, a child who does not have a close relationship with their mothers due to communication have not had a close relationship even before the pandemic.

As seen in Tables 1 and 2, the percentage of respondents who indicated having a close or distant relationship with their fathers is roughly equal, with 54,1% for a close and 42% for a distant relationship. On the other hand, the number of respondents who reported having a close relationship with their mother is significantly higher than those who do not, with 74,4% for a close relationship and 23,7% for a distant relationship. Lamb (1981) states that the relationship with the mother or father is autonomous. The relationship quality between a child and their mother and father depends on the interaction between child and mother and child with father, respectively. Consequently, there can be a difference in closeness between a child and their mother and father. Looking at the roles in the family, the father as the head and breadwinner can be busier and spend less time at home than a mother, especially a homemaker mother. Mothers have more time to spend at home to interact and show their kids more affection.

Based on what the respondents said, the difference in attitude that mothers and fathers display toward their children can influence their relationship. Gender can also factor in a quality relationship between children and their parents. Following the findings of Hapsari and Ariati (2016) that female adolescents are closer to their parents because of the emotional and intellectual differences between males and females. In addition to being at home more often, mothers have higher emotional sensitivity when relating to children. Therefore, a child feels safer and more understood by their mother than by their father.

CONCLUSION

Kebijakan Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat (PPKM), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has impacted the closeness of children with their parents. Children who were close with their fathers or mothers before the pandemic grew closer because of more time spent at home and interacting. Interestingly, children distant from their parents before the pandemic stayed distant even while living in the same house. Communication becomes the primary indicator of a close child's relationship with their father and mother. A lack of communication can cause a distant relationship between the child and their father or mother. The parent-child relationship can be enhanced by applying the findings of this research, which is to increase the opportunity for effective communication. The results of this research can also provide a basis for further investigation into why children, especially emerging adults, choose to limit, hesitate, or even try to avoid communication with their parents, causing them to be distant from their parents. Emerging adults often bore their challenges and problems alone, which can impact their mental health.

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