



Husband-Wife Communication in Gold Miner Families in Tatelu (A Case Study in Tombatu Village, Tombatu District, Southeast Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi Province)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine husband-wife communication within the families of gold miners in Tatelu, specifically focusing on a case study in Tombatu Village, Tombatu District, Southeast Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi Province. This research is significant for its analysis of the interpersonal communication established between husbands and wives; the author explores the issues that arise in their communication and the nature of their conversations. While previous research by Lestari (2015) addressed communication patterns and marital satisfaction, the present study focuses more specifically on the quality of interpersonal communication between spouses, incorporating the psychological aspects of their relationship. This study employs a qualitative research method, utilizing informants from families in Tombatu Village where at least one member works at the Tatelu gold mine. The findings indicate that openness is a fundamental attitude for sustaining the husband-wife relationship; such openness allows domestic conflicts to be averted at an early stage. Empathy is demonstrated through body language and tone of voice that convey care, ensuring that spouses—even when physically separated—feel attended to. Mutual support is shown by agreeing with a partner's views (even if reluctantly) and avoiding an attitude of superiority regarding specific matters—such as consenting to a husband working at the mine despite the inherent risks. Finally, equality in the relationship between these couples is reflected in their practice of offering mutual advice and reminders to one another.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human daily life is inseparable from communication; indeed, humans engage in communication from the moment of birth. As social beings, humans cannot live in isolation; they coexist with others, relying on one another to sustain their lives. The English word "communication" derives from the Latin *communis*, meaning "common." Terms such as *communico* or *communicare* signify "making something common" (Dedy Mulyana, 2002:41). Communication takes various forms, ranging from direct interaction—often referred to as face-to-face or interpersonal communication—to group communication involving several individuals.

Communication is the key to connecting with others. When people engage in communication through conversation, the process succeeds as long as there is a shared understanding of the meaning behind the words spoken. Since the mere use of shared words does not guarantee mutual understanding, it is essential to grasp the actual meaning of those words.

The family is the smallest unit of society, typically consisting of a husband, wife, and children living together under one roof. It can be defined as a social group formed by kinship ties linking individuals to one another. Within the family, communication between husband and wife is crucial, serving as the bridge for interaction between parents



and children. Unfortunately, poor communication between spouses can negatively impact family harmony (Arifuddin, 2015).

In terms of intimacy, the communicative relationship between a husband and wife is classified as an intimate relationship. It is categorized as such because it is characterized by high levels of warmth and affection, trust, self-disclosure, and responsibility (Najoan, 2015). Ultimately, communication is vital for married couples in their domestic lives, fostering healthy interaction and dialogue among all family members. Many marital issues arise from a lack of active and intensive communication between husband and wife. A root cause may be a lack of mutual understanding or a failure to communicate effectively. Alternatively, the couple may rarely spend time together, causing unvoiced issues to fester and accumulate; this leads to frequent misunderstandings and, ultimately, arguments.

The Tatelu mining area is a natural resource management zone—focused primarily on gold—operated by several villages within the Dimembe District, including Talawaan, Tatelu, Warukapas, Tatelu Rondor, and Wasian. History shows that although information circulated as early as 1953 indicating that Bukit Batu Api contained gold, the local community did not know how to process the vast deposits found there. Years earlier, they had nearly handed over this valuable asset to a foreign company; indeed, they had effectively "gifted" it to outsiders—individuals knowledgeable about gold mining but not from the Tatelu area—who sought to profit from the locals' lack of expertise. At the same time, however, the locals received a "gift" that caused them considerable trouble: a barrage of allegations regarding mercury pollution in the Talawaan watershed. This was ironic, given that the community's traditional livelihoods had long been centered on agriculture and fisheries. Most residents would set out each morning with their farming tools to work in their fields; for centuries, they had cultivated crops such as coconut, clove, and vanilla, and farmed the land—all while sitting atop "gold."

Gold miners from Tombatu Village travel to mining sites located a great distance from their homes. Consequently, they are required to live at the mine site, returning to their residences only after several weeks of work.

A husband working as a gold miner in Tombatu Village must leave his wife and child at home for weeks at a time to meet the family's economic needs, resulting in the couple rarely seeing each other. One example of the issues encountered arises when a husband calls his wife but receives no answer, leading him to wonder why the call went unanswered. This study also examines the income of the husbands in these mining families.

The situation of couples living apart and the challenges they face make for a compelling research topic. Communication issues between spouses are a particular area of interest; while marital communication typically occurs face-to-face, these gold-mining families must rely on technological tools or communication channels, which presents a unique challenge. The author aims to study the communication patterns within these marriages.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In accordance with the research title, this study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach (Bungin, 2015:35). The key informant is the researcher; consequently, the informants for this study were selected based on the following characteristics: married couples (10 individuals) and a government representative (1 individual).

The study focuses on the interpersonal communication of married couples—specifically those involving mine workers in Tatelu who reside in Tombatu Village—by applying Joseph A. DeVito's (2013) theory regarding the general qualities of interpersonal communication, which are examined through:

- a. Openness
- b. Empathy
- c. Supportiveness
- e. Equality

This study utilizes two types of data sources:

1. Primary data
2. Secondary data

Data collection in this study was conducted using the following techniques:

1. Observation
2. Interviews
3. Documentation

Data analysis employed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was verified through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS



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This study focuses on the interpersonal communication between husbands working at the Tatelu mine and their wives residing in Tombatu Village, utilizing Joseph A. DeVito's (2013) theory regarding the general qualities of interpersonal communication, specifically:

a. Openness

Communication is a crucial element of married life. Through communication, families can build bonds, resolve issues, and construct a positive future. The quality of a family is often reflected in how its members communicate with one another. Communication patterns vary from couple to couple. Couples may find themselves in long-distance relationships for various reasons, such as employment requirements necessitating separate living arrangements, economic factors, educational pursuits, and so forth.

Among the informants in Tombatu Village (Tombatu District, Southeast Minahasa Regency), the primary reasons cited for maintaining long-distance relationships were employment and economic factors. Initially, the separation caused by work demands often brought sadness and reluctance to the couples; however, over time, they adapted to the situation. There are various reasons why wives in Tombatu Village—and their husbands—are willing to maintain long-distance relationships; these include social influences and information sharing among peers, as well as the critical factor of economics.

Interview results indicate that openness between partners is vital in long-distance relationships. Openness ensures that the wife remaining at home feels at ease while the husband working away feels reassured; conversely, a lack of openness is a source of conflict between couples in Tombatu Village, particularly those where the husband works at the Tatelu mine. Couples typically discuss the importance of openness before the husband begins work at the mine—a conversation particularly relevant for wives, who often have more free time and opportunities to interact with others.

Effective communication patterns—whether between husband and wife or within the family unit—must be maintained in these long-distance arrangements. If misunderstandings arise in the communication between a husband and wife from the very beginning, the flow of communication will be disrupted, and the relationship they have built will become chaotic. Effective communication patterns are essential for maintaining a long-distance marriage, as they help sustain the bond between the couple despite living apart. Consequently, even when parents live separately from their children, their relationships remain strong and healthy.

b. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to sense feelings from another person's perspective. It emphasizes the importance of perceiving others' emotions as a foundation for building healthy interpersonal relationships. Empathy shifts focus toward recognizing the emotions of others; the better individuals understand their own emotions, the more skilled they become at reading the emotions of others. Consequently, the higher an adolescent's level of empathy toward others, the easier it is for them to interact with others and receive the information provided (Minarti, 2005). Furthermore, empathy is a factor influencing quality of life, including within the family and in the relationship between husband and wife.

In a broader sense, empathy is defined as a social skill that goes beyond merely sharing another person's experience (vicarious affect response) to include the ability to respond with care to that person's feelings and behavior. It is not surprising that the practice of giving or offering charity—aside from being an act of worship—can also cultivate a child's empathy for others and foster a generous nature (Frieda, 2010).

In this study, the aforementioned definition of empathy is applied to the communication between husbands and wives where the husbands work in the mining sector in Tatelu. Empathy manifests as a sense of mutual care when the couple exchanges information via communication channels. Long-distance relationships often face numerous obstacles that trigger arguments; similarly, in the context of this study—even though the physical distance and duration of separation were not extreme—work-related pressure and needs could still provoke emotional reactions.

Based on the research findings regarding the empathy displayed in these long-distance relationships, it can be concluded that consistent communication helps maintain mutual care. Most of the husbands interviewed stated that their motivation for working in the mines was to meet their family's needs and ensure its progress. A sense of empathy is sustained when the interpersonal relationship remains healthy..

The situation differs for Informant F.P., a housewife who runs a side business selling goods online; her husband works in a mine—a job she disapproves of and would prefer he not do, out of concern for his health and safety. Her emotions react to the potential risks involved. Empathy is key to effective listening, which in turn fosters effective communication. It involves perception and communication characterized by resonance and identification—experiencing firsthand the emotional reflections felt by another person. Communicating empathetically also means being sensitive to any responses or cues—verbal or non-verbal—from the audience or the person receiving the message. Empathetic communication is communication rooted in deep emotional understanding.



c. Supportive Attitude

Effective interpersonal relationships are those characterized by a supportive attitude. Individuals demonstrate supportiveness by being descriptive rather than evaluative, and spontaneous rather than strategic. The functions of interpersonal communication include fostering human relations, avoiding and resolving personal conflicts, reducing uncertainty, and sharing knowledge and experience with others. Through interpersonal communication, individuals can strive to build good relationships with others, thereby avoiding and resolving conflicts between them (Cangara, 2005:56).

The need for support from others is a fundamental human trait; when others care and offer encouragement, individuals are motivated to pursue their initial goals. Similarly, regarding mining work, positive communication and mutual support impact the husband's performance. A harmonious family is not created automatically or naturally. All efforts to achieve a harmonious family, as described above, can be summarized into several steps identified by Stinnet & DeFrain (cited in Kustini (ed.), 2007:51), namely: maintaining religious life within the family; ...spending sufficient time with the family; interactions among family members characterized by good communication and a democratic attitude; mutual respect; unity; and a focus on prioritizing the integrity of the household. Therefore, marital harmony relies heavily on communication, specifically the ability of the husband and wife to communicate effectively.

A supportive attitude manifests in specific ways, characterized by the willingness to agree with a partner's opinion—even if reluctantly—and by refraining from acting as though one knows better than the partner. This positive attitude arises because the partners enjoy sharing stories or engaging in lengthy conversations and are capable of offering appreciation or praise. This is illustrated by the experience of certain informants who, despite being deeply reluctant to let their husbands work in the mines due to the high risks involved, ultimately chose to offer their support out of respect for their husbands' intentions.

The informants' daily communication is primarily verbal, involving the exchange of information and generally serving a specific purpose. Conversations may be initiated by the wife, the husband, or both parties simultaneously. The goals of these interactions include fostering positive outcomes, strengthening the relationship, and establishing consensus and unity in decision-making. Interpersonal relationship maintenance is characterized by shared commitment, mutual understanding of differences, and the practice of limiting conversation to necessary topics. Differences do not pose a problem for these couples, as each partner strives to understand the other and exercises restraint regarding topics that might cause hurt feelings. They are able to express dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their partner's behavior—with the aim of improvement—thereby ensuring the relationship remains healthy.

In this study conducted in Tombatu Village, some informants encountered communication barriers, particularly physical ones, such as those experienced during telephone conversations. Other obstacles included poor-quality information, trivial chatter, and rumors. Emotional states—such as anger, annoyance, and feelings of being offended—also acted as barriers. According to the informants, domestic conflict is a natural and inevitable part of life, sometimes even occurring in rapid succession.

d. Equality

Interpersonal communication is more effective when the atmosphere is one of equality. This implies a tacit acknowledgment that both parties are valued, useful, and have something important to contribute. Equality requires us to extend unconditional positive regard to the other individual (Liliweri, 1991: 13). Interpersonal communication is essentially a social process in which the participants influence one another. This process of mutual influence is psychological in nature and thus marks the beginning of psychological bonds between individuals.

The issue of equality extends to the domestic sphere—specifically, the relationship between husband and wife. Cultural norms in Minahasa dictate that the man, as the husband, is responsible for meeting the needs of his wife and children, while the wife provides moral support and assists her husband in earning a livelihood. The husband serves as the head of the family, and the wife as the homemaker. As the head of the family, the husband acts as the leader, bearing responsibility for all family affairs, protecting its members, and managing the household.

Liberal feminism is a school of feminist thought that specifically focuses on the position of women in society. Key figures in this movement include Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), Angelina Grimké (1792–1873), and Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906). Liberal feminism emerged in the West during the 18th century, coinciding with the rise of the "Age of Reason" (Enlightenment). Its foundational assumption rests on the doctrine of natural rights—the idea that every human being possesses fundamental rights, including the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Megawangi, 1999: 118–119).

The underlying premise of this group is that all human beings—men and women alike—are created in a state of harmony and balance, and thus, no oppression should exist between them. Liberal feminism draws inspiration from Enlightenment principles, positing that both men and women possess their own distinct characteristics. Ontologically,

however, they are equal; consequently, the rights held by men are inherently the rights held by women. Despite the label "liberal feminism," this group does not advocate for absolute sameness between men and women.

In the context of this study, equality in communication is linked to feminist ideology. Such an understanding of equality in communication is evident in the relationships between husbands and wives—specifically those where the husband works at the Tatelu gold mine. Informants indicated a mutual understanding regarding equality in expressing opinions and offering input: husbands acknowledge the realities of their wives' lives at home, while wives understand the conditions at the mine site—such as the lack of signal—and the feelings their husbands experience while working there.

4. CONCLUSION

1. Openness is a fundamental attitude for maintaining the husband-wife relationship; such openness allows domestic conflicts to be averted at an early stage. This holds true for couples in Tombatu Village where one partner works at the Tatelu Mine; research indicates that openness is crucial in long-distance relationships—particularly for wives remaining in the village, who might otherwise be at risk of forming relationships with others.
2. Empathy involves demonstrating mutual care between individuals—including the husbands and wives who are the focus of this study. This empathy is expressed through body language and tone of voice that convey concern, ensuring that the partner living apart feels cared for and attended to.
3. Supporting a husband who works in the mines can boost his morale. In this study, mutual support is demonstrated by agreeing with a partner's views—even if reluctantly—and by avoiding an attitude of superiority regarding specific matters; an example is consenting to the husband working in the mines despite the potential risks involved.
4. Equality in the marital relationship among couples connected to the Tatelu gold mine is demonstrated through mutual advice and reminders; husbands understand the situation of their wives and children at home, while wives, in turn, understand the conditions their husbands face at the mine site.

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