# The Influence of Family Communication on the Character Formation of Generation Z Children in The Digital Era (Analytical Study in Palembang City, South Sumatra)

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the influence of family communication on the formation of the character of Generation Z children in the digital era, with a focus on the study in Palembang City, South Sumatra. In the family, communication has an important role in building harmonious relationships and forming basic values that are the foundation of children's character. Generation Z, who grew up amidst the advancement of digital technology, faces unique challenges in family interactions due to the dominance of gadgets and social media use. This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with data collected through a questionnaire to 55 adolescent respondents of Generation Z in Palembang. Data analysis was carried out using multiple regression to identify a significant relationship between family communication and the formation of children's character. The results of the study show that effective family communication patterns contribute positively to the formation of children's character, especially in the development of moral values, empathy, and social skills. However, distraction from the use of gadgets is the main challenge in maintaining the quality of family communication. This study recommends communication strategies that involve limiting the use of technology during family time and increasing face-to-face communication to support the character formation of Generation Z children in the digital era.

***Keywords:*** *Family communication, character building, generation Z, digital era, family harmony*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, communication in the family has not only changed in form but also in substance [1]. Interactions that used to be dominated by direct conversations are now largely replaced by technology-based communications such as text messages, video calls, and social media [2]. Technology has created new opportunities to strengthen family ties, especially for family members separated by distance [3]. However, on the other hand, technology also brings serious challenges, such as increased distractions, lack of attention, and shallow communication between family members. This phenomenon is of particular concern because it can affect the quality of emotional relationships in the family and, ultimately, the formation of the child's character [4].

Generation Z, who was born and raised during the advancement of digital technology, has unique characteristics in the way they communicate and interact [5]. This generation is known as a generation that is very adaptive to technology and multitasking, tends to be more comfortable with virtual communication than direct communication. These characteristics present new challenges for parents in establishing effective and meaningful communication with their children. If family communication does not go well, Generation Z can have difficulty in building moral values, empathy, and social skills optimally [6].

In addition, social and cultural changes also affect the way of communication in the family. In an urban society like Palembang, economic pressures, work demands, and modern lifestyles often reduce quality time spent with family. This is compounded by the divergence in values and expectations between generations of parents and Generation Z children, which often leads to conflicts and gaps in communication. For example, parents tend to rate gadget use as a negative behavior, while Generation Z children see it as an integral part of their lives [7].

As the first social unit known to children, the family plays an important role in shaping a child's personality and character. Effective communication in the family not only encourages the development of social skills but also builds a child's confidence, empathy, and ability to face challenges outside the family environment [8]. Therefore, it is important to identify communication patterns that can support the formation of children's characters, especially in the context of the ever-evolving digital era [9].

Previous studies have shown that healthy family communication is positively correlated with the development of children's character [10]. However, research that specifically connects family communication and the formation of the character of Generation Z children in the digital era, especially in certain areas such as Palembang, is still very limited. This condition creates a research gap that needs to be bridged through more in-depth studies. This research aims to fill this void by exploring how family communication patterns affect the formation of the character of Generation Z children in the midst of the challenges of the digital era.

Against this background, this study will focus on several key questions, such as: how has the pattern of family communication changed along with the development of digital technology? What are some of the challenges families face in maintaining healthy communication? And how can families develop effective communication strategies to support the formation of children's character in the digital era? The answers to these questions are not only important for families in Palembang but can also serve as a reference for other families facing similar challenges in the digital age.

Family communication is one of the important aspects in shaping children's character, especially in the challenging digital era [11]. In this context, family communication theory becomes relevant to understand how interactions in the family affect the development of children's values and attitudes [12]. However, this study found that there is a gap in the literature related to family communication, especially in the context of Generation Z growing up in the digital era, as well as the lack of studies that link family communication with the formation of children's character specifically in the Palembang area.

Although many studies discuss family communication in general, only a few examine its impact on the formation of the character of Generation Z children in the digital era, especially in urban areas such as Palembang. This study aims to fill the gap by using a quantitative approach to analyze the relationship between family communication and the formation of children's character.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Grand Theory

This research is based on **the Family Systems** *Theory* developed by this theory emphasizing that the family is an interconnected emotional system, where the behavior of each family member affects the other members. In the context of family communication, this theory is relevant because it shows how the dynamics of communication in the family can affect the formation of children's characters [13].

In addition, this research also refers to the **Socialization Theory,** which highlights the role of the family as the main agent in shaping children's values, attitudes, and behaviors through the process of communication and interaction.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 55 Generation Z teenagers in Palembang. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis to identify the influence of family communication on the formation of children's character. The study population is Generation Z adolescents aged 15–25 years in Palembang. The sample was randomly selected considering socio-economic variations and geographical backgrounds. The questionnaire is designed based on indicators of family communication and the formation of children's character, which includes verbal, nonverbal, and digital aspects.

### 3.1. Interview Data

Respondent 1 (A, 16 years old):
**How is communication in your family, especially with your parents?**
  "Communication with my parents is sometimes difficult because they are busier with work. Usually, we communicate via WhatsApp, especially when there is an urgent matter. However, when we are together at home, we rarely talk at length because they are often busy with gadgets as well."
Respondent 2 (B, 19 years old):

**How has technology affected your family's communication?**

"Technology helps us stay connected, especially when I am out of town for college. Nevertheless, when at home, everyone is busy with their gadgets, so direct communication is rare."

Respondent 3 (C, 23 years old):

**How do you think your parents influenced your character?**

"My parents often set an example of discipline and responsibility. But sometimes they are too busy, so I feel like I have to learn a lot on my own, especially in dealing with problems."

Respondent 4 (D, 18 years old):

**What is the role of family communication in your daily life?**

"Family communication is very important to me, especially when I am stressed by schoolwork. My parents are usually supportive, however when they're busy, I find it hard to talk to them."

Respondent 5 (E, 20 years old):

**Does your family have a special time to talk without the distraction of gadgets?**

"Not really. We usually talk over dinner, but that's also often interrupted because my dad gets work calls from his phone."

Respondent 6 (F, 15 years old):

**What are some challenges in your family communication?**

"The main challenge is the difference in perspective between me and my parents. They often think I use social media too much, when I also use it to study."

Respondent 7 (G, 21 years old):

**How would you describe the pattern of communication in your family?**

"My parents tend to be authoritarian, so communication is more one-way. I listen more often than I speak."

Respondent 8 (H, 17 years old):

**What are you doing to improve communication with your family?**

"I try to start conversations more often, especially when we're eating together. But sometimes, it's difficult because they look busy."

Respondent 9 (I, 22 years old):

**What is the role of your family in shaping your character?**

"They give me the freedom to choose, but still direct if I'm wrong. Open communication really helps me to learn from mistakes."

Respondent 10 (J, 25 years old):

**What do you think is the biggest challenge in your family's communication?**

"The biggest challenge is the lack of time together due to each other's work and busyness. Sometimes we talk via chat even though we live in the same house."

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Dynamics of Family Communication

The results showed that 72% of respondents felt that communication in their families was significantly affected using digital technology. Most families use digital platforms like WhatsApp to communicate, replacing direct verbal communication.

### 4.2. The Influence of Family Communication on Children's Character

Regression analysis showed that family communication had a significant positive influence on the formation of children's character with a regression coefficient value of 0.65 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that effective communication in the family, either directly or through technology, can form a positive character in a child.

### 4.3. Challenges in Family Communication

As many as 68% of respondents reported communication disruptions due to excessive use of gadgets, which led to a lack of direct interaction between family members.

### 4.4. Discussion

#### 4.4.1. The Role of Communication in Children's Character Formation

The results of the study support the family system theory, which confirms that family communication is the foundation for the formation of children's character. Good communication patterns, such as listening with empathy and giving positive feedback, help children develop moral and ethical values[14].

### 4.4.2. Challenges of the Digital Age

In the digital era, families face challenges in the form of distractions from social media and gadgets. This is in line with previous findings [15], which stated that technology can reduce the quality of communication in the family if not managed properly.

### 4.4.3. Strategies to Improve Family Communication

Strategies that can be implemented include:
- a. Limit the time spent using gadgets in the family.
- b. Increase the frequency of face-to-face communication.
- c. Using technology as a supporting tool, not a substitute for direct communication.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Family communication has an important role in shaping the character of Generation Z children, especially in the digital era. Effective communication patterns, both directly and through technology, can strengthen family relationships and help children develop positive character. However, challenges such as excessive use of gadgets need to be overcome with the right strategies to maintain the quality of family communication.

### 5.1. Recommendations

- a. Parents need to be an example in using technology wisely.
- b. Digital literacy education must be introduced to help families manage communication in the digital era.
- c. More research is needed to explore the impact of family communication on other aspects of a child's development, such as mental health and emotional intelligence.

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