

# Interpersonal Communication of Single Mother in Supporting The Continuity of Their Children's Education During Adolescence in Yogyakarta

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Interpersonal Communication Support;  
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Single mothers' interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in supporting their children's education during adolescence in Yogyakarta. This research aims to analyze and understand the interpersonal communication strategies used by single mothers to ensure the continuity of their children's education. This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, involving in-depth interviews with single mothers and adolescents as respondents. The results show that supportive interpersonal communication, such as providing emotional support, active listening, and positive feedback, can increase adolescents' self-confidence and engagement in the educational process. In interpersonal communication, verbal aspects (words, advice) and emotional aspects (empathy, affection) are essential for building strong emotional bonds. However, time constraints and economic pressures often pose challenges to maintaining consistent communication. This study concludes that despite various barriers, effective interpersonal communication remains a key factor in supporting adolescents' educational success.

## 1. Introduction

The increasing number of single mothers in Indonesia, particularly in Yogyakarta, due to the high divorce rate, has posed significant challenges, especially when it comes to raising teenage children. According to data from Bappeda DIY (2024), 38,000 divorce cases were recorded in Yogyakarta, placing it in 9th place nationally (Darmawan, 2024). As a result of these divorces, many children grow up under the care of single mothers who must fulfil the dual roles of breadwinner and caregiver. Divorce is often triggered by factors such as incompatibility, domestic violence and economic hardship. The rising divorce rate, particularly in Yogyakarta, has had a serious impact on adolescents. Moreover, divorce often leads to an increase in single-parent households, where the mother typically becomes the head of the family. In many cases, child custody is granted to the mother, making her the sole parental figure. This undoubtedly increases the burden on mothers when it comes to raising and educating their children, particularly during adolescence — a critical developmental stage at which self-identity begins to form, and environmental influences are significant.

Single mothers face unique challenges when raising children, particularly during adolescence. This is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, and a crucial phase in developing a sense of self. Teenagers also experience difficulties when their parents' divorce. One such challenge is the change in their interactions with not only their parents, but also their peers. Adolescents who experience family conflict often feel different to their friends and may be embarrassed or afraid that others will find out about their situation. This can lead them to hide it. Therefore, effective communication between single mothers and their adolescent children is essential.

In this context, effective communication between mothers and children is crucial for supporting children's education and development. Open communication can foster a sense of security and confidence and help children to navigate emotional challenges. Poor communication, on the other hand, can lead to problems such as juvenile delinquency, behavioural issues and drug abuse (Aprilia, 2023; Ernawati et al., 2020). However, single mothers often face the challenge of taking on dual roles as both breadwinners and caregivers. This dual responsibility can put considerable pressure on them as they must manage their time and resources efficiently to meet their children's needs. Research by Suryadinata (2016) suggests that effective communication between single mothers and their children can foster a supportive educational environment.

In Yogyakarta, single mothers often struggle to fulfil their dual roles as caregivers and breadwinners, which can affect their children's motivation and focus on education. Data from BPS Yogyakarta (2023) supports this, showing that 49.47% of adolescents aged 15–24 did not continue their education beyond high school. This suggests a low level of educational motivation, potentially linked to a lack of parental attention following divorce. For single mothers, this challenge is further compounded by the fact that they must serve as both financial providers and emotional supports for their children. According to Suslinda et al. (2023), adolescents from single-mother households are particularly vulnerable to emotional problems due to the absence of a father figure. Combined with economic pressures, these adolescents may also be compelled to contribute financially to the family. The emotional and physical absence of a parent can further deteriorate a child's psychological well-being. Conversely, effective interpersonal communication can foster positive emotional bonds between mothers and children (Anggraini et al., 2022).

Poor communication patterns between mothers and children can further worsen this situation, negatively impacting children's motivation to learn and their overall educational success. By contrast, effective interpersonal communication can foster trust, a sense of security and the emotional support that adolescents require when navigating life transitions. According to Anggraini et al. (2022), interpersonal communication is a dynamic process shaped by ongoing interaction, playing a crucial role in the relationship between mothers and their children. When communication flows effectively, children feel more supported and self-assured, and are better equipped to face various social challenges.

In Yogyakarta, many single mothers struggle to provide their children with a quality education. However, not all of them have good communication skills. Research by Wulandari (2021) reveals that many single mothers struggle to communicate with their adolescent children, who often undergo emotional and behavioural changes. These communication challenges can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts that may have a negative impact on the child's educational development. Therefore, it is important to explore how single mothers in Yogyakarta communicate with their children to support their education.

However, research on interpersonal communication within single-mother families in Indonesia, particularly in Yogyakarta, remains limited. Most existing studies tend to focus on intact, two-parent families. This study aims to address this gap by examining the roles and challenges that single mothers face in supporting their adolescent children's education through interpersonal communication. Busy schedules, psychological stress and social stigma can all pose significant obstacles to establishing healthy and supportive communication. Therefore, it is important to examine the communication strategies used by single mothers in Yogyakarta to maintain their children's motivation and educational progress. This research will specifically examine the role of interpersonal communication in supporting the educational development of teenage children of single mothers in Yogyakarta.

## 2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, collecting data in the form of words or images rather than numbers (Sugiyono, 2020). The study aims to describe the nature of social conditions as they occur during the research process. The primary method of data collection is in-depth, face-to-face interviews to gather detailed and comprehensive information (Kriyantono, 2020).

Informants are selected using purposive sampling based on the following specific criteria: they must be families who have experienced divorce, reside in Yogyakarta, have children in late adolescence and where the mother has custody of the child.

The collected data will be analysed using qualitative analysis techniques, conducted interactively and continuously until data saturation is reached. According to Miles and Huberman (cited in Sugiyono, 2020), the analysis process involves four stages: data collection; data reduction; data display; and drawing conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, this study employs source triangulation, whereby a single type of data source is used — namely informants. The purpose of this triangulation method is to ensure that the research is conducted appropriately, thereby producing credible and trustworthy results and conclusions (Sugiyono, 2020).

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### Presenting the Results

The results of the study indicate that single mothers employ three primary patterns of interpersonal communication to support their children's education: open and dialogic communication, supportive communication with positive feedback, and regular communication with a focus on educational matters. These patterns reflect interpersonal communication strategies that serve not only as channels for message delivery but also as means to foster emotional bonds between mother and child. In the context of single-mother households, such emotional connections are crucial for maintaining adolescents' psychological well-being and ensuring the continuity of their educational journey.

The analysis reveals that these communication patterns are intentionally applied by single mothers as a way to provide both emotional and academic support to their children.

#### Interpersonal Communication Patterns of Single Mothers

##### a. Open and Dialogic Communication

The first pattern, open and dialogic communication, is characterised by the informants' efforts to actively listen, give children space to express themselves and avoid authoritarian behaviour. Healthy interpersonal communication is built on openness, which is essential for fostering trust and emotional closeness. This is evident in the words of one of the informants, who emphasised the importance of listening without interrupting and actively encouraging children to share their feelings. Openness has been identified as a key factor in the success of single mothers in fostering their children's self-confidence. Dialogic and empathic communication has been shown to strengthen the mother-child relationship and support healthier emotional development in children (Bestari & Aesthetika, 2021).

All informants demonstrated open communication patterns with their children, albeit to varying degrees. Informant (S) shared, *"I always listen without interrupting when my child tells me stories. I also frequently ask questions to encourage her to express her feelings."* The child (F) echoed this, saying, *"Our communication is more open. We often talk about each other's feelings and expectations. Mum also listens to me more now."*

##### b. Supportive Communication and Positive Feedback

The second pattern involves supportive communication and positive feedback. Informants provided emotional and verbal support to show their appreciation for their children's achievements, no matter how small. This approach aligns with the concept of supportive communication in interpersonal communication theory, which emphasises the use of praise, encouragement and emotional validation as motivational reinforcement tools. Even in low socioeconomic environments, single mothers are able to foster strong emotional bonds with their children through supportive communication practices. These practices express pride and appreciation for their children's non-academic qualities and provide consistent moral support in the context of their children's education (Jacobs, 2023).

In addition to strengthening emotional connections, supportive communication has also been shown to boost children's intrinsic motivation to learn. Authoritative communication patterns, which include emotional support and flexible discipline, are more effective for single mothers when educating their adolescent children than authoritarian or permissive approaches (Putri & Mikom, 2024). Therefore, it can be concluded that providing positive feedback boosts children's self-confidence and fosters a supportive, enjoyable learning environment.

Single mothers demonstrate supportive communication patterns by offering verbal and emotional support. Informant (T) shared, *"When my child gets good grades, I show my appreciation by giving them a small reward."* Similarly, informant (S) stated, *"I always praise him when he achieves something, no matter how small."*

### c. Regular Communication About Education

All three informants engage in regular communication with their children regarding education. Informant (S) reported discussing educational matters at least once a week, while Informant (T) said he had frequent discussions with his child. Informant (R)'s child (N) also confirmed this, saying, *"Depending on our busy schedules and activities, we usually discuss these topics several times."*

The third pattern identified was regular communication focused on education. In single-mother families, these regular discussions about education play a crucial role in fostering a sense of responsibility for learning and reinforcing clear academic expectations. This finding aligns with the concept of educational support communication, whereby parents actively engage in their children's academic lives. Research by Jacobs and Daniels (2020) shows that, even in challenging economic circumstances, single mothers remain highly involved in their children's education through consistent educational communication. This serves as a form of emotional capital that supports children's academic success.

### Educational Support Strategies Applied

Emotional support is one of the main strategies used by single mothers. Informant (S) shared: *"I always remind my child that failure is part of the learning process."* Similarly, informant R's child N explained, *"My mum provides emotional support in a very warm and pleasant way. She is always there for me when I need her."*

Single mothers make an effort to create a supportive learning environment at home. The child (F) of the informant (S) shared, *"Mum tries to create a calm atmosphere at home when I study. She also limits distractions from the TV and other things so that I can focus."* Similarly, the child of informant R explained that their mum always makes sure that their house has a calm and comfortable atmosphere.

All three informants involve their children in decision-making related to their education. Informant S shared, *"I always ask for my son's opinion before making decisions, such as choosing a school or extracurricular activities."* This was confirmed by her child, who said, *"Mum respects my opinion."* Informant T also said, *"I always give my child the freedom to decide what kind of education they want to pursue in the future."*

### Create a Discussion

Divorce is a significant transitional event in family life that greatly affects the relationship between mothers and their children, particularly for single mothers. This study reveals that divorce leads to a shift in communication patterns between mothers and their adolescent children, characterised by greater openness, empathy and supportive attitudes. This transformation aligns with the indicators of effective interpersonal communication outlined by De Vito (2011) and emphasised by Henri and Yuliani (2022), which include mutual understanding, openness, and emotional support.

This finding is consistent with the research of Bestari and Aesthetika (2021), which indicates that single mothers who effectively foster self-confidence in their teenage children tend to engage in open, empathetic, and supportive communication in their daily interactions. The researchers also emphasise the importance of a mother's physical and emotional presence in fostering trust and strong emotional bonds. In this context, divorce can prompt mothers to strengthen neglected relationships.

However, this process does not always happen automatically. Not all single mothers are able to foster complete openness with their children, particularly if they have unresolved emotional conflicts with their former partner. Therefore, the quality of communication largely depends on the mother's emotional state, as well as her ability to reflect on and improve her relationship with her child (Vidita, 2018).

Table 1. Analysis Results

Field Findings	Conceptual Findings
The mother and child are open with each other in communication	Communication becomes a source of closeness and trust
The mother gives praise and encouragement when the child makes an effort	Emotional support helps enhance learning motivation
Regular discussions about school and education	The mother's communication serves as a form of involvement in the child's education
The mother creates a calm learning atmosphere	The home environment becomes a space for emotional support
The child is involved in choosing school/activities	Communication encourages the child to be more responsible and confident
The mother continues to communicate despite being busy and tired	Communication strategists are developed to adapt to difficult situations
The child feels supported and becomes more open with the mother	The quality of the relationship is more important than a traditional family structure

#### 4. Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role of effective interpersonal communication between single mothers and their teenage children in supporting educational continuity. Despite facing challenges such as economic pressure, social stigma and time constraints, single mothers continue to strive for open, supportive and consistent communication. Such communication patterns foster a positive emotional environment, boost children's motivation to learn and encourage mothers' active involvement in their children's education. Providing emotional support and involving mothers in educational decision-making also helps to keep adolescents motivated and focused during this transitional phase.

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