

Communication Patterns of Minang Students in Yogyakarta in Maintaining Good Relationships with Parents

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Family Communication; Migrant Students; Minangkabau; Digital Communication; Communication Patterns

Digital communication within migrant student families plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of relationships between children and their parents. This study aims to describe the communication patterns of Minangkabau students who migrate to Yogyakarta in sustaining their relationships with their parents. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. A purposive sampling technique was used to select informants aligned with the research objectives: Minangkabau students who had migrated for at least 6 months and regularly communicated with their parents via digital media. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and prolonged engagement. The findings indicate that the coordinative pattern emerged as the most dominant pattern across the three informant pairs. This pattern is characterized by communication triggered by financial and academic administrative needs, accompanied by rational explanations, clarification, negotiation, and parental validation before decisions are made. Educational demands shape the coordinative pattern, students' financial dependence, Minangkabau cultural values embedded in the tradition of merantau, an interdependent family relational structure, and the support of digital communication technologies. These findings demonstrate that family communication in the context of educational migration not only maintains emotional closeness but also serves as a mechanism for shared decision making.

1. Introduction

Student migration is an increasingly common feature of higher education in Indonesia, where many students pursue tertiary education outside their home regions. Beyond an academic transition, migration entails a social and communicative shift, as geographical separation requires families to renegotiate emotional closeness, daily coordination, and relational stability across distance (Tinto, 2012). Consequently, family communication among migrant students has become a critical concern within communication studies.

Digital media enable frequent contact between migrant students and parents through instant messaging, voice calls, and video calls (Bruess, 2015; Walther, 2011). However, frequent interaction does not necessarily translate into communicative openness. Previous studies indicate that communication is often limited to routine updates and reassurance, while issues related to academic pressure, psychological distress, and financial difficulties are selectively filtered or withheld. This tendency reflects what (Afifi & Olson, 2005), describe as a chilling effect in family communication, where individuals regulate information sharing to avoid emotional burden.

Cultural context further shapes these dynamics. In Minangkabau society, the tradition of merantau emphasizes independence, resilience, and the obligation to uphold family dignity. These values encourage migrant students to present themselves as self-reliant and emotionally strong in interactions with parents, influencing openness and emotional expression in family communication (Munir & Pandin, 2021; Mulyana, 2017).

This study focuses on Minangkabau migrant students in Yogyakarta, a national education hub that attracts students from across Indonesia, including a substantial population from West Sumatra (Badan Pusat Statistik Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (BPS DIY 2023, n.d.) Digital communication therefore becomes the primary medium through which long-distance family relationships are maintained, allowing families to navigate physical separation through multiple communication platforms, a condition described as polymedia in migrant family (Madianou & Miller, 2012) Although research on migrant student communication has expanded, most studies emphasize communication frequency, media choice, or general adaptation. Limited attention has been given to how cultural values shape communication openness and relational maintenance through distinct functional patterns. Moreover, gender differences in communication practices are often overlooked, despite evidence that men and women may emphasize different relational and emotional communication strategies (A. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Wood, 2013).

To address these gaps, this study examines the communication patterns of Minangkabau migrant students in Yogyakarta by integrating cultural perspectives with a functional analysis of digital family communication. Specifically, it analyzes routine communication, emotional expression, coordination of needs, and relational maintenance to understand how students maintain relationships with their parents while navigating academic, financial, and mental health challenges within the cultural expectations of merantau. This study contributes to the literature by identifying coordinative communication as a dominant functional pattern shaped by the interplay of cultural values, structural dependence, and digital communication practices in migrant student families. This study offers a novel contribution by integrating cultural values, functional communication patterns, and digital media practices within a single analytical framework. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on communication frequency or media choice, this research emphasizes how Minangkabau cultural values shape the emergence of coordinative communication patterns in long-distance family relationships. By doing so, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how communication functions as both a relational and decision-making mechanism in the context of educational migration.

Family communication in the context of migration has been widely discussed within communication studies, particularly in relation to how individuals maintain relational stability despite geographical separation. However, the integration of cultural values, communication functions, and digital media usage within a single analytical framework remains relatively underexplored. This study draws upon several theoretical perspectives to understand how Minangkabau migrant students maintain relationships with their parents through digital communication.

One of the central frameworks employed in this study is the Family Communication Patterns Theory developed by Koerner & Fitzpatrick. This theory explains how family interactions are shaped by two primary dimensions: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation refers to the degree to which family members are encouraged to participate in open dialogue, express opinions, and engage in discussion. In contrast, conformity orientation emphasizes homogeneity of beliefs, hierarchical structures, and the expectation that family members adhere to shared norms and parental authority.

In the context of migrant students, these two orientations interact in complex ways. While geographical distance may encourage greater independence and openness in communication, cultural expectations and family structures often maintain a degree of conformity. This creates a hybrid communication pattern in which students are able to express their needs and opinions, but still operate within a framework that requires parental approval and validation. Such a configuration is particularly relevant in collectivist cultures, where family cohesion and interdependence are highly valued.

Another important theoretical perspective is the concept of polymedia introduced by Madianou & Miller. Polymedia refers to an environment where multiple communication platforms are available, and individuals choose specific media not merely based on technical affordances, but on the social and relational meanings attached to each medium. In migrant family contexts, this means that communication choices—whether through text messaging, voice calls, or video calls—carry implicit messages about urgency, emotional significance, and relational intent.

For instance, asynchronous communication such as instant messaging may be used for routine updates, while synchronous communication like phone calls or video calls is often reserved for more urgent or important matters. This strategic selection of media reflects an awareness of communicative efficiency and relational sensitivity, particularly in situations that require immediate clarification or emotional reassurance.

In addition to polymedia, Media Synchronicity Theory (Dennis et al., 2008) further explains how different communication media vary in their capacity to support shared understanding. Synchronous media, which allow real-time interaction, are more effective in situations that involve ambiguity, negotiation, or complex decision-making. In contrast, asynchronous media are more suitable for simple information exchange. Within the context of this study, the preference for synchronous media in discussions related to financial or academic matters indicates the importance of clarity and mutual understanding in maintaining family coordination.

Another relevant concept is the chilling effect in family communication, as proposed by Afifi & Olson. This concept describes the tendency of individuals to withhold or filter information to avoid causing concern, conflict, or emotional distress within the family. In the case of migrant students, this often manifests in the selective disclosure of personal challenges, such as academic pressure or mental health issues. Students may choose to present themselves as capable and resilient, aligning with cultural expectations while simultaneously maintaining emotional distance in certain aspects of communication.

Furthermore, family communication can be categorized into instrumental and expressive functions (Galvin et al., 2019). Instrumental communication refers to interactions that are task-oriented and focused on achieving specific goals, such as coordinating financial support or managing academic responsibilities. Expressive communication, on the other hand, emphasizes emotional connection, support, and relational maintenance. This study finds that instrumental communication tends to dominate in the context of migrant student–parent relationships, particularly due to the practical demands associated with higher education.

Cultural context also plays a crucial role in shaping communication patterns. In Minangkabau society, the tradition of merantau represents not only physical migration but also a cultural process that emphasizes independence, resilience, and the responsibility to uphold family honor. Despite this emphasis on independence, decision-making processes often remain embedded within a collective family framework. This duality creates a dynamic tension between autonomy and interdependence, which is reflected in communication practices between students and their parents.

Previous studies on migrant families have shown that digital communication technologies do not fundamentally transform relational structures, but rather reinforce existing patterns of interaction (Hertlein & Blumer, 2023). In this sense, technology acts as an enabler rather than a determinant of communication patterns. The findings of this study support this perspective, as digital communication among Minangkabau migrant students appears to reproduce culturally embedded norms of coordination, consultation, and parental authority.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communication patterns are constructed within the intersection of cultural values, technological affordances, and relational dynamics. This approach allows for a deeper analysis of not only how communication occurs, but also why certain patterns emerge as dominant in the context of educational migration.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the communication patterns of Minangkabau migrant students in Yogyakarta in maintaining relationships with their parents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants selected using purposive sampling, namely active undergraduate students of Minangkabau ethnic background who had experienced a minimum of six months of migration and regularly communicated with their parents through digital media. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation of sources and theoretical perspectives. A total of six informants (three pairs of students and parents) were involved in this study. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted through digital communication platforms. The use of a qualitative approach is considered appropriate as this study aims to explore in depth the meanings, experiences, and communication dynamics between students and their parents. Although the number of informants is relatively small, it is sufficient to capture rich, detailed, and context-specific data, which is the primary objective of qualitative research. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, where recurring patterns and meanings were identified, categorized, and interpreted systematically to generate comprehensive findings.

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the thematic analysis of interview data, several recurring patterns of communication were identified between students and their parents. These patterns reflect how interactions are structured, particularly in relation to academic and financial needs. Table 1 summarizes the key indicators that characterize the dominant communication pattern found in this study.

Table 1

Informant	Communications Pattern	Indicator
L1–H1	Coordinative Pattern	1. Usually contacts parents when there are matters related to tuition fees or campus administration. 2. Explains the reasons for needing money. 3. Discusses plans together before making a decision. 4. Parents provide guidance before giving approval. 5. The conversation focuses on problem-solving.
A2–W2		1. Financial issues are often the main reason for contacting parents. 2. Prefers calling to ensure the explanation is clearer. 3. Discusses and confirms everything before the funds are transferred. 4. Seeks parental approval when making a decision. 5. Communication is directed toward finding a definite solution

N3–A3	Coordinative Pattern	1. Contacts parents when there is an urgent need. 2. Explains the reasons first before asking for support. 3. Decisions are made after being discussed together. 4. Chooses phone calls or video calls for important matters. 5. Parents help in thinking through possible solutions.
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Source: Interview

Based on Table 1, all informant pairs demonstrate a consistent dominance of the coordinative pattern in their communication with parents. This finding suggests that digital communication among Minangkabau students studying away from home does not merely function to preserve emotional closeness, but also operates as a coordination mechanism that sustains the continuity of their education.

Empirically, communication is generally triggered by financial and administrative needs, particularly tuition payments, urgent expenses, and academic planning. This pattern indicates that interactions are instrumental and oriented toward problem-solving. Students first provide rational explanations regarding their needs, after which parents offer clarification, consideration, and advice before a decision is made. This sequence reflects a deliberative process within long-distance family relationships.

To understand why the coordinative pattern becomes dominant, it is necessary to explain the indicators that shape this pattern in communication between students and parents. These indicators can be identified in:

a. Clarification Before Expressing Needs

One of the primary characteristics of the coordinative pattern is that students do not immediately request assistance; instead, they first clarify the reasons and needs they are facing. For example, when requiring tuition fees or other urgent expenses, students typically explain the background of the situation, the amount needed, and why the expense is essential. This indicates that the communication is not merely a request, but one accompanied by explanation and consideration. In family communication studies, this type of interaction is categorized as instrumental communication, which refers to communication used to organize tasks and responsibilities within the family (Galvin et al., 2019). Thus, communication is not solely emotional in nature but also functions to address practical needs.

b. Discussion Prior to Decision-Making

Another indicator is the presence of discussion before a decision is finalized. Students and parents typically deliberate on the identified need in advance, including possible solutions or alternative courses of action. Decisions are not made unilaterally; instead, they emerge through two-way communication.

Within the context of family decision-making, such a process is referred to as *shared decision-making*, meaning that decisions are generated through mutual discussion (Scott & Scott, 2005). This finding indicates that students remain actively involved in the decision-making process, even though parents continue to hold a significant role in granting final approval.

c. Parental Approval or Validation

Another indicator observed within the coordinative pattern is the presence of parental approval or validation before students proceed with a decision. Students tend not to act immediately after expressing their needs; instead, they wait for responses, advice, or direction from their parents. Particularly in matters related to tuition fees or other significant needs, actions are taken only after mutual agreement has been reached. In family communication scholarship, such a process reflects

an authority structure within the family, where parental figures retain a legitimizing role in decisions that affect other members (Sillars et al., 2004). This means that communication is not solely intended to convey information, but also to ensure that decisions have undergone collective approval. This dynamic reinforces the coordinative nature of the pattern, as it involves confirmation prior to action.

d. Communication Focused on Problem Solving

The coordinative pattern is also characterized by communication that predominantly addresses academic and financial needs rather than casual or expressive conversations. In other words, interactions are more frequently triggered by specific situations that require concrete solutions. This demonstrates that communication within the context of migrant students carries a strong practical function. According to (Galvin et al., 2019), family communication not only serves to maintain emotional closeness but also functions to manage shared responsibilities. In this study, that function is clearly reflected in discussions concerning tuition payments and administrative requirements, highlighting the instrumental dimension of student–parent communication.

e. Selection of Media Based on Situational Needs

The final indicator concerns the choice of communication media. When a situation is perceived as important or urgent, students tend to prefer phone calls or video calls rather than text messages. These forms of communication enable direct interaction and help minimize misunderstandings. Media Synchronicity Theory explains that real-time media are more effective when communication requires rapid clarification and mutual understanding (Dennis et al., 2008). The findings therefore indicate that media selection in student–parent communication is not random, but strategically aligned with the demands of the situation.

Based on the above explanation, the indicators of the coordinative pattern in this study include clarification of needs, discussion prior to decision-making, parental approval, a problem-solving orientation, and the selection of media aligned with urgency. These indicators demonstrate that communication between students and parents does not merely function to maintain relational bonds, but also operates as a coordination mechanism in decision-making processes related to the continuity of academic pursuits.

This finding aligns with research on long-distance families, which emphasizes that communication technologies not only serve to maintain emotional closeness, but also facilitate the coordination of family responsibilities (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2020). In the context of educational migration, digital communication serves as a medium to maintain the academic and financial stability of students.

Moreover, the preference for synchronous media such as phone calls and video calls for important matters reflects a deliberate consideration of urgency and the need for immediate clarification. (Sinaga et al., 2024). This is consistent with the concept of polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2012), which explains that individuals select media based on relational meanings and the context of interaction.

Recent studies on family communication and technology further indicate that digital communication practices tend to reinforce pre-existing relational patterns rather than fundamentally transform them. (Hertlein & Blumer, 2023). Thus, digital communication in this study does not generate a new relational structure; rather, it reproduces culturally embedded patterns of family coordination.

The dominance of the coordinative pattern can also be analyzed through Family Communication Patterns Theory (A. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). The combination of conversation orientation the presence of open discussion regarding educational needs and conformity orientation the acknowledgment of parental legitimacy in the final decision indicates that the relationship between students and parents is interdependent. Students autonomy is therefore not fully independent; rather, it is negotiated through rational and dialogic communication processes.

Within the cultural context of Minangkabau society, which upholds the tradition of merantau (outmigration), individual independence remains embedded within a framework of collective family responsibility (Munir & Pandin, 2021). Consequently, digital communication becomes a space for

negotiating personal autonomy and familial legitimacy. This finding is further supported by research on family communication among Indonesian migrant workers, which shows that long-distance communication frequently centers on discussions related to household financial management and remittance allocation, rather than merely serving as an exchange of affection (Muksin et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, routine and expressive patterns remain present but do not constitute the core of interaction. Students tend to regulate their emotional openness to avoid causing concern for their parents. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of the chilling effect (Afifi & Olson, 2005), which explains individuals' tendency to filter emotional information in order to preserve relational stability within the family.

Based on these findings, the dominance of the coordinative pattern in this study is not only understood as an empirically observed phenomenon, but also as one shaped by various factors that influence the decision-making process within the relationship between students and their parents.

a. Educational Factor

Academic needs such as tuition payments, campus administrative requirements, and urgent expenses demand communication that is rational, structured, and oriented toward problem-solving. In the context of higher education, the continuity of students' studies largely depends on family support, both financially and socially. This situation encourages deliberative communication processes that involve clarification and validation before decisions are made (Tinto, 2012).

b. Economic Factor

Students' financial dependence on their parents strengthens the parents' position within the decision-making process. When economic resources remain under family control, communication tends to involve clarification, negotiation, and mutual approval before any action is taken (A. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

c. Minangkabau Cultural Factor

Within the Minangkabau tradition of *merantau* (outmigration), students' independence remains embedded within collective family responsibility. This means that even though students live far from their parents, important decisions are not made entirely independently; instead, they are discussed and mutually agreed upon within the family (Munir & Pandin, 2021).

d. Communication Technology Factor

The use of phone calls and video calls enables discussions and negotiations to take place directly and with greater clarity, particularly in urgent situations. Therefore, media selection is not random; rather, it is carefully considered based on the context and urgency of the communication (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

Based on the above explanation, educational, economic, cultural, and technological factors cannot be understood in isolation; rather, they are interconnected in shaping communication patterns between students and their parents. The demands of higher education, which require financial resources and administrative management, encourage students to communicate in a structured and purposeful manner. Financial dependence strengthens parental involvement in significant decisions. At the same time, Minangkabau cultural values embedded in the tradition of *merantau* frame communication within a collective responsibility framework, ensuring that decisions are not made unilaterally. Meanwhile, the use of media such as phone calls and video calls supports clearer and more immediate discussions, particularly when situations are urgent.

Accordingly, the predominance of the coordinative pattern in this study cannot be attributed to a single determinant. Rather, it emerges from the convergence of academic demands, economic conditions, cultural values, and the dynamics of family relationships that interact with one another. The interplay of these factors produces a communication process characterized by clarification, negotiation, and mutual consent in decision-making.

Beyond identifying the factors that shape the coordinative communication pattern, it is essential to further examine how this pattern influences the broader relational dynamics between students and

their parents. Therefore, this section focuses on the emotional, relational, and structural implications of communication within migrant family contexts.

a. Emotional and Relational Dimensions

While the findings indicate that coordinative communication dominates interactions between students and their parents, it is also important to examine the relative absence of expressive or emotional communication within these relationships. Although students maintain regular contact with their parents, the content of these interactions is often limited to practical matters, such as financial needs and academic responsibilities.

This tendency suggests that emotional expression is selectively regulated. Students may intentionally avoid discussing personal struggles, including stress, anxiety, or academic difficulties, in order to prevent causing concern for their parents. This aligns with the concept of the chilling effect, where individuals consciously filter information to maintain relational harmony. In this context, communication becomes a strategic process, balancing the need for support with the desire to protect family members from emotional burden.

From a cultural perspective, this behavior can also be linked to the values embedded in the Minangkabau tradition of merantau. Students are expected to demonstrate independence and resilience while living away from home. As a result, expressing vulnerability may be perceived as a sign of weakness or failure to fulfill these expectations. Consequently students construct a communicative identity that emphasizes competence and self-reliance, even when facing significant challenges.

However, this pattern of limited emotional disclosure may have implications for the quality of relationships. While instrumental communication ensures the continuity of academic and financial support, the lack of expressive communication may reduce opportunities for emotional bonding and mutual understanding. Over time, this could lead to a form of relational distance that is not physical, but emotional in nature (Afifi & Olson, 2005).

b. Gender Perspective in Communication Patterns

Another dimension that warrants further discussion is the role of gender in shaping communication practices. Previous studies have suggested that men and women may differ in their communication styles, particularly in terms of emotional expression and relational orientation (Wood, 2013).

In the context of this study, male students may be more likely to adopt a restrained communication style, focusing primarily on practical matters and minimizing emotional disclosure. This aligns with broader societal expectations of masculinity, which emphasize independence, control, and emotional restraint. Female students, on the other hand, may exhibit greater openness in expressing emotions and maintaining relational closeness, although this tendency is still influenced by cultural norms and family expectations.

Despite these differences, both male and female students appear to operate within a shared framework of coordinative communication. This suggests that while gender may influence the style and content of communication, the overall pattern remains shaped by structural factors such as financial dependence, cultural values, and educational demands.

c. Power Relations and Decision-Making Dynamics

The dominance of coordinative communication also reflects underlying power relations within the family. Although students are physically independent, their financial dependence on their parents reinforces a hierarchical structure in which parents retain authority over important decisions.

This dynamic is evident in the requirement for parental approval before taking action, particularly in matters related to finances and academic planning. Communication, therefore, is not only a means of exchanging information, but also a process of negotiation and legitimization. Students must justify their needs and decisions, while parents evaluate and validate these requests based on their own considerations.

From the perspective of Family Communication Patterns Theory, this reflects a balance between conversation orientation and conformity orientation. While open discussion is encouraged, final

authority often remains with the parents. This creates a relational structure that is both dialogic and hierarchical, allowing for participation while maintaining parental control (A. F. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2017).

d. Communication as Negotiation of Autonomy and Dependence

The dominance of coordinative communication patterns in this study can be further understood as a manifestation of ongoing negotiation between autonomy and dependence within migrant student–parent relationships.

While physical distance suggests a transition toward independence, the findings indicate that decision-making processes remain relationally embedded, particularly due to financial reliance and cultural expectations.

This dynamic reflects a form of “negotiated autonomy,” in which students are not fully independent actors, but rather individuals whose agency is constructed through interaction with their parents. Communication, therefore, becomes a space where autonomy is not simply exercised, but continuously negotiated, justified, and validated. Students are required to articulate their needs in a rational and structured manner, demonstrating responsibility and awareness of consequences. In turn, parents evaluate these requests and provide approval, guidance, or alternative suggestions.

From a relational dialectics perspective, this interaction illustrates the tension between independence and connectedness. Rather than resolving this tension, communication serves as a mechanism for managing it. The coordinative pattern allows both parties to maintain their respective roles: students as emerging independent individuals, and parents as authoritative yet supportive figures.

This finding reinforces the argument that independence in the context of educational migration is not absolute, but relational. Students may live physically apart from their families, yet their decision-making processes remain deeply interconnected with family structures. As a result, communication is not merely functional, but constitutive of relational identity and family roles (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

e. Digital Communication as Relational Infrastructure

Beyond its function as a medium of interaction, digital communication in this study can be conceptualized as a form of relational infrastructure that sustains long-distance family relationships. Rather than simply facilitating communication, digital platforms enable the continuity of family roles, expectations, and decision-making processes across geographical boundaries.

The concept of polymedia suggests that individuals actively construct meaning through their choice of communication channels. In this study, the use of synchronous media such as phone calls and video calls for important discussions indicates that these platforms are perceived as more appropriate for situations requiring immediacy, clarity, and emotional nuance. Conversely, text-based communication is often used for routine updates, reflecting a lower level of urgency and complexity.

This differentiation demonstrates that media choice is not technologically determined, but socially constructed. Students and parents develop shared understandings of which media are appropriate for specific types of interaction. These patterns become routinized over time, forming part of the broader communication structure within the family.

Furthermore, digital communication enables what can be described as “ambient co- presence,” where individuals maintain a sense of connection despite physical separation. Even brief or routine interactions contribute to a continuous awareness of each other’s lives, reinforcing relational bonds. However, this sense of closeness does not necessarily translate into deeper emotional disclosure, as communication remains largely instrumental in nature (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

f. Emotional Regulation and Selective Disclosure

Another important dimension of communication patterns in this study is the role of emotional regulation. Students demonstrate a tendency to carefully manage the information they share with their parents, particularly in relation to personal challenges or emotional distress.

This selective disclosure can be interpreted as a form of relational maintenance strategy (Afifi & Olson, 2005). By withholding potentially distressing information, students aim to protect their parents from unnecessary concern or emotional burden (Afifi & Olson, 2005), thereby preserving family harmony. At the same time, this behavior reflects an internalization of cultural expectations that emphasize strength, resilience, and self-sufficiency.

However, this pattern raises important questions regarding the long-term implications for emotional well-being and relational intimacy. While the suppression of emotional disclosure may reduce immediate tension, it may also limit opportunities for emotional support and mutual understanding. Over time, this could result in a form of emotional distance that coexists with high levels of functional communication.

This finding suggests that effective family communication is not solely determined by frequency or continuity, but also by the depth and openness of interaction. Therefore, future research should consider not only how often families communicate, but also what is communicated and what remains unspoken.

g. Communication Sustainability in Long-Distance Family Relationships

In addition to functioning as a coordination mechanism, communication between migrant students and their parents can also be understood as a sustainability practice (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2020) that ensures the long-term continuity of family relationships. Within the context of geographical separation, maintaining relational stability requires not only frequency of interaction, but also consistency, adaptability, and mutual understanding.

The findings of this study indicate that sustainability in communication is achieved through the routinization of interaction patterns. Students and parents develop implicit agreements regarding when and how communication should occur, as well as the types of issues that warrant immediate attention. Over time, these patterns become normalized, creating a predictable structure that reduces uncertainty and strengthens relational trust.

This routinization is particularly important in situations where physical co-presence is absent. Without regular face-to-face interaction, families rely on mediated communication to maintain awareness of each other's circumstances. As a result, even brief or seemingly mundane interactions contribute to a sense of continuity and relational presence.

However, sustainability in communication is not without challenges. The reliance on digital media introduces potential barriers, such as misinterpretation, delayed responses, or technological limitations. These challenges require individuals to develop adaptive strategies, including clarifying messages, selecting appropriate communication channels, and adjusting communication styles based on context.

h. Integration of Cultural Values and Modern Communication Practices

Another important aspect revealed in this study is the integration of traditional cultural values with modern communication practices. The Minangkabau tradition of *merantau* emphasizes independence, responsibility, and the preservation of family honor. At the same time, contemporary communication technologies provide new ways of maintaining connection and coordination.

Rather than replacing traditional values, digital communication appears to reinforce and adapt them to a new context. For instance, the expectation that students remain accountable to their parents is maintained through regular updates and consultation, even when they are physically distant. Similarly, the emphasis on collective decision-making is preserved through discussions conducted via phone calls or video calls.

This integration demonstrates that cultural values are not static, but dynamic and adaptable. They evolve in response to changing social and technological conditions, while retaining their core principles. In this sense, digital communication serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, enabling families to maintain continuity while adapting to new forms of interaction (Munir & Pandin, 2021).

i. Toward a Holistic Understanding of Migrant Family Communication

Taken together, the findings of this study highlight the need for a more holistic understanding of family communication in the context of migration. Rather than viewing communication solely as an exchange of information or emotional expression, it should be understood as a multifaceted process that encompasses coordination, negotiation, cultural reproduction, and relational maintenance (Galvin et al., 2019).

The coordinative pattern identified in this study represents only one dimension of a broader communication system. While it plays a central role in managing practical needs, it is interconnected with other forms of interaction that contribute to the overall quality of the relationship. Future research should therefore adopt a more integrative approach, examining how different communication functions interact and evolve over time.

These findings extend existing literature by demonstrating that communication in migrant families is not solely oriented toward emotional closeness, but also functions as a structured mechanism for negotiation and shared decision-making. This suggests that instrumental communication plays a central role in maintaining relational stability, particularly in contexts characterized by financial dependence and cultural expectations.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the dominant communication pattern in the relationship between Minangkabau migrant students and their parents is the coordinative pattern. This pattern is characterized by the clarification of needs, discussion prior to decision-making, and parental approval in matters related to academic and financial concerns. The findings indicate that communication is not unilateral, but rather operates through mechanisms of mutual consideration. As discussed, the dominance of the coordinative pattern is shaped by the demands of higher education, students' financial dependence, Minangkabau cultural values emphasizing collective family responsibility, and the strategic selection of communication media that facilitates direct clarification. These four factors simultaneously construct a communication process oriented toward coordination and shared decision-making.

Thus, digital communication in the context of educational migration functions not only as a means of maintaining relational bonds, but also as a deliberative mechanism that supports the academic continuity of migrant students. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term implications of limited emotional disclosure on relational intimacy and psychological well-being among migrant students. Additionally, further studies may examine different cultural contexts to compare how communication patterns vary across diverse family structures.

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