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# The Communication Style of Batak Ethnic Parents in Shaping Their Children's Character

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse the communication style of Batak ethnic parents and its influence on the character formation of their children. The research is grounded in the characteristics of Batak culture, which is known for being firm and open and for upholding the values of kinship and authority within the family. This research uses a qualitative, descriptive approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three Batak ethnic parents, followed by triangulation with the child's perspective to examine the impact of communication on character formation The research results show that the communication style of Batak ethnic parents tends to be assertive. This communication style is evident in the firmness with which rules are conveyed, the directness of advice, and the openness in expressing feelings. However, in certain conditions, there is an emphasis on obedience, dominance in decision making, and high expectations regarding the child's achievements. This communication style influences a child's character, shaping it to be disciplined, responsible, and respectful toward parents. Furthermore, this communication style is influenced by internal factors, such as parents' self-confidence and communication skills, as well as external factors, including Batak cultural norms, social learning within the family, emotional relationships, and awareness of effective communication.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country with various cultures, ethnicities, and languages. Each ethnic group brings its own system of values, norms, and communication styles into its social life. These differences influence how individuals interact and also serve as a means of passing cultural values from generation to generation. In the context of intercultural communication, communication styles reflect ethnic identity through language choices, intonation, and patterns of daily social interaction.

Cultural diversity in Indonesia not only creates variations in communication practices but also shapes how individuals interpret messages in social interactions. In this context, communication is not neutral; rather, it is laden with values, symbols, and norms that are passed down through generations. Each ethnic group has a different interpretative framework for understanding verbal and nonverbal expressions, making intercultural misunderstandings unavoidable. Therefore, understanding communication styles from a cultural perspective becomes important to avoid interpretive bias toward a particular group (Gudykunst & Kim, 2017). One of the ethnic groups with strong communication characteristics is the Batak, which consists of the sub-ethnic groups Batak Toba, Karo, Mandailing, Simalungun, and Pakpak. The Batak people are known for their direct, assertive, and high-pitched communication style. That speaking style is often misinterpreted as anger, whereas, from the Batak cultural perspective, it is a symbol of openness and sincerity in expressing

opinions. Furthermore, the characteristic of the Batak community's communication, which is assertive and expressive, is also related to the social structure that emphasizes the values of openness, courage, and honesty in expressing opinions. In practice, communication serves not only as a tool for exchanging information but also as a mechanism for asserting social identity and individual position within the group. This indicates that the Batak communication style cannot be separated from the underlying cultural value system and therefore needs to be understood contextually, not merely based on external perceptions (Bahtiar Siregar, 2023). Usman Pelly explained that the habit of speaking loudly in Batak society is related to the historical geographical conditions around Lake Toba, which necessitated long-distance communication between groups (Filzah Lubis, 2023).

The characteristics of that communication not only appear in the community's social space but are also reflected in family communication. Parents play a central role in guiding, nurturing, and shaping their children's character. Family communication serves as the first informal education, shaping a child's worldview, self-identity, and moral values (Bahtiar Siregar, 2023). The communication style of parents, both verbal and nonverbal, will determine how children learn to manage emotions, imitate behavior, and build social relationships (Marwah Hardini, 2023). In a family environment, communication not only conveys messages but also internalizes values and shapes long-term interaction patterns. A consistent communication style will shape children's mindset and behavioral habits. Thus, the family becomes the main space in building the foundation of character that will carry over into adulthood, making the quality of communication within the family an important indicator of the success of the parenting process (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020).

Conceptually, the family communication environment influences a child's personality development. Children who grow up in passive communication tend to become closed individuals, whereas assertive communication shapes confident and balanced children. Conversely, aggressive communication can shape a character who is stubborn and lacks empathy. Daily family interactions are the primary factor in shaping each child's unique personality. Furthermore, the formation of a child's character is also closely related to the ability to regulate emotions, which is learned through interactions with parents. Children who grow up in an open communication environment tend to have better emotional management skills than those in a high-pressure environment. This emotional regulation plays an important role in shaping empathy, self-control, and the ability to resolve conflicts constructively (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020).

The process of personality formation is greatly influenced by social interactions within the family, especially during childhood (Rahmah, 2018). Children tend to imitate their parents' behavior, as the main figures in their lives. From the perspective of communication psychology, deviations in personality formation can manifest as personality disintegration, personality disorders, personality issues, or personality syndromes if the process of value internalization does not proceed in a healthy manner (Suciati, 2019).

The relationship between character and personality shows that character is the foundation of the moral values underlying personality, as evidenced in daily behaviour. Personality represents consistent and unique patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour in each individual (S. Praja, 2013). Thus, family communication style is one of the most influential factors in shaping a child's character and personality.

Social phenomena show the negative impact of unhealthy family communication, such as the case of a teenager in Pemalang who threatened his mother due to conflicts in meeting needs. Aggressive behaviour like that can be linked to poor emotional control and a non-dialogical communication style within the family. On the other hand, the story of an accomplished teenager like Salwa Regina, who won Miss Teen Green Runway Sulsel 2025, shows that supportive and encouraging communication can foster confidence and courage in children. The difference between these two phenomena emphasises that family communication styles significantly contribute to character formation. This phenomenon shows that children's behavioral problems cannot be separated from the quality of family communication. When communication is one-sided, high-pressure, or lacking empathy, children tend to have difficulty understanding behavioral boundaries rationally. Conversely, open and dialogical communication allows children to understand the reasons

behind each rule, so they not only comply but also internalize the values more deeply (Rahmah, 2018).

These findings align with the Observational Learning theory, which states that children acquire behaviour through the imitation of observed models, especially parents (Yanurdianto, 2019). A communication style rich in emotional control will be imitated as positive behaviour, while communication filled with pressure and conflict can shape impulsive and aggressive character in children. In this context, the modeling process is particularly important because children not only imitate what their parents say but also how they convey that message. Communication styles accompanied by emotional control, clarity of message, and respect for the interlocutor will be more easily internalized as positive behavior. Conversely, impulsive and aggressive communication can be replicated by children in their social interactions (Yanuardianto, 2019).

Although various studies have examined family communication styles and their influence on child development, most still approach communication in a general sense without sufficiently considering the role of cultural context in shaping these interactions. In fact, culture plays a significant role in determining how communication is expressed and interpreted within parenting practices.

Previous research highlights the importance of this issue. Lubis and Rahmadi (2023) found that Batak Mandailing cultural values influence children's moral development through family communication. Similarly, Verena (2023) identified the use of authoritarian communication styles among some Batak parents in instilling discipline, while Marwah Hardini (2023) demonstrated the coexistence of assertive and aggressive communication styles in parenting.

However, existing studies have largely focused on general parenting patterns or specific outcomes such as moral and social development, with limited attention to how assertive communication is constructed within ethnic-based cultural frameworks. In the context of Batak families, where firmness and directness are culturally embedded, this creates a gap in understanding whether such communication reflects authoritarian control or a form of structured assertiveness. Furthermore, prior research rarely explores micro-level interaction patterns between parents and children, including how rules are conveyed, how disagreements are managed, and how emotions are expressed in everyday communication. As a result, there remains limited empirical insight into how assertive communication operates in practice and contributes to children's character formation. At the same time, studies have shown that open two-way communication encourages positive social behavior in children (Shafa Muhtaba & Kurnia Gustini, 2024), indicating the importance of dialogic interaction in parenting.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by providing an in-depth qualitative analysis of assertive communication among Batak parents. By focusing on the lived experiences of Batak families, this study offers a context-specific perspective that enriches the broader discourse on family communication. Rather than generalizing about communication styles, this research highlights the importance of understanding how cultural meanings are embedded in everyday interactions, thereby providing a more grounded, nuanced explanation of assertive communication practices. It focuses on how cultural values, interpersonal communication, and parenting practices intersect in shaping children's character. The uniqueness of this research lies in its emphasis on ethnic-based communication styles, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to the study of family communication within Indonesia's cultural context.

## 2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to deeply understand the communication style of Batak ethnic parents in shaping their children's character, focusing on daily family communication experiences and interactions. This approach was chosen because it can explore subjective realities, meanings, and social dynamics that cannot be explained through numerical data (Hanif Hasan, 2025). The research object focuses on the communication practices of Batak ethnic parents in educating and shaping their children's character. Data were collected through semi structured in-depth interviews with Batak ethnic parents and children to obtain experiences, perceptions, and meanings related to family communication (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The selection of

informants was conducted using purposive sampling, with the criteria being Batak parents who actively communicate within the family and children who directly experience the communication patterns, ensuring that the data obtained is relevant and in-depth (Nasution, 2023). The validity of the data is tested through source triangulation, by comparing information from parents and children to enhance the credibility of the findings (Mekarisce, 2020). Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification until credible findings were obtained (Abudssamad, 2021).

## 3. Result and Discussion

To provide a clearer overview of the empirical findings, the results of this study are summarized in the following table. The table presents the communication styles demonstrated by each informant pair, along with the specific indicators of assertive communication identified during the interviews. In addition, it outlines the internal and external factors that influence the emergence of these communication patterns within each family. By organizing the data in this way, the table highlights both consistency and variation across informants, enabling a more systematic understanding of how assertive communication is practiced and shaped within the Batak family context.

**Table 1**

| Informant | Communication style | Information | Factors that influence |
|---|---|---|---|
| E1 – M1 | A S S E R T I V E | 1. Corrective and appreciative statements.<br>2. Expressing feelings directly.<br>3. Rejecting rationally and effectively.<br>4. Asking questions before agreeing.<br>5. Rejecting imposing opinions. | - Internal parents: self-confidence and communication skills.<br>- Batak cultural norms: values of openness and assertiveness. |
| S2 – A2 | | 1. Speak firmly with reasons.<br>2. Express feelings openly.<br>3. Rational rejection.<br>4. Clarification before making a decision.<br>5. Share experiences as a form of learning. | - Knowledge and experience in parenting: reflection on life experiences.<br>- Emotional relationship between parents and children: emotional closeness as a driver of dialog. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| E3 – W3 | | 1.Corrective & appreciative statements.<br>2. Open expression of feelings.<br>3. Rational rejection.<br>4. Asking before agreeing.<br>5. Appropriately appreciating compliments.<br>6. Not accepting imposing opinions. | - Religious/cultural values: guidelines for values in family interactions.<br>- Social awareness: orientation toward understanding and explanation. |

Source: Interview Data, 2026

Based on Table 1, all informants exhibit a dominant assertive communication style in their interactions with children. This dominance was consistently found across all pairs of informants. In Pair 1, the assertive style was evident when the parents conveyed study and discipline rules directly, accompanied by rational reasons. In the second informant couple, assertiveness manifests as clear, non-shouting verbal reprimands. Meanwhile, in the third informant couple, assertive communication is evident when the parents maintain their decision with logical arguments, even tho the child tries to express a different opinion. All informants demonstrate that assertiveness is not manifested through unilateral pressure, but rather through argumentative and dialogic communication. This finding indicates that assertive communication serves not only as an interactional style but as a relational strategy that balances authority and emotional closeness within the family. Previous studies have shown that assertive parenting fosters mutual respect and open communication between parents and children, which, in turn, supports positive behavioral outcomes (Shafa Muhtaba & Kurnia Gustini, 2024)

Empirically, communication in all three families functions as both behavior control and a means of clarification and value learning. In the case of informant pair 1, when the child makes a mistake, the reprimand is delivered directly with an explanation of the logical consequences. In the case of informant pair 2, parents tend to ask the child for their reasons before agreeing to a specific request. In the case of informant 3, the parents give the child a chance to explain their position before the final decision is made. This pattern was found in all informants, although the intensity of the dialogue was most pronounced in informant pairs 2 and 3. These patterns suggest that family communication operates not only as behavioral regulation but also as a medium for internalizing values and norms. Consistent with family communication studies, dialogic interaction within the family enables children to develop reasoning skills and emotional understanding through daily interpersonal exchanges (Rahmah, 2018).

To understand the dominance of the assertive style more deeply, the following indicators of the assertive theory can be explained separately:

1. Speaking with Firmness (Corrective and Appreciative Statements)

All pairs of informants demonstrated the ability to convey rules and corrections directly without using threats or belittling the child. This indicator was empirically found in informant pair 1 when learning rules were conveyed firmly with reasons, in informant pair 2 through corrective reprimands accompanied by explanations of consequences, and in informant pair 3 in the form of affirming the parent's position without belittling the child. This firmness is also balanced with giving praise when the child meets the parents' expectations, which was found in all informants. In interpersonal communication theory, this behavior is categorized as assertive, corrective, and appreciative statements, which are the ability to convey behavioral standards while also acknowledging the achievements of others (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). Firmness accompanied by appreciation has been proven to enhance the clarity of norms within the family while simultaneously strengthening the child's self-esteem, as the child understands behavioral boundaries without losing

the sense of being valued (Speed et al., 2018). This pattern aligns with findings that parental firmness combined with appreciation fosters a supportive yet structured environment, allowing children to understand expectations while maintaining psychological security (Sabarua & Mornene, 2020).

2. Ability to Express Feelings Openly

All three parents consistently express feelings of worry, disappointment, pride, and happiness directly to their children. This indicator was found in all informants, particularly in the pairs of informants 1 and 2 who explicitly conveyed worries and pride verbally, as well as in the pair of informant 3 who expressed disagreement without hiding their feelings. This behavior demonstrates the ability of emotional expressiveness in family communication. According to Burleson (2010), parental emotional openness plays an important role in forming affective bonds and enhancing children's empathy. In the context of this research, the expression of feelings is not withheld or conveyed passively-aggressively, but rather expressed directly through verbal communication by all informants. This strengthens interpersonal relationships because the child can clearly understand the parents' emotional position. Emotional openness in family communication has also been associated with healthier emotional development, as children learn to identify, express, and regulate their emotions through modeled behavior (Suciati, 2019)

3. Refusing Rationally and Effectively.

When not agreeing to the child's request, all three pairs of informants did not immediately scold or impose their decision, but rather provided logical reasons before making the final decision. This indicator was found in all informants, with a stronger intensity in informant couple 2 and informant couple 3, who consistently presented arguments before rejecting the child's request. In the concept of assertiveness, the ability to say "no" rationally without damaging interpersonal relationships is a key characteristic of assertive communication (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976). This rational rejection also reflects the family's discussion orientation, as seen among all informants, in which the child is still given an understanding of why a decision cannot be approved. This form of rational rejection reflects a constructive parenting approach, where disagreement becomes part of the learning process rather than a source of conflict escalation.

4. Asking Questions Before Approving Requests

All informants tended to ask for reasons before approving the child's request. This indicator was found in all pairs of informants, but was most consistent in pairs 2 and 3, which clarified part of the decision-making process. This behavior indicates a process of clarification and negotiation. In the Family Communication Patterns Theory, this pattern falls under conversation orientation, which is the tendency of families to encourage open discussions before making decisions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). Clarification before approval helps children learn to justify their decisions and reasons rationally. Such practices indicate that children are positioned as active participants in communication, thereby supporting the development of critical thinking and responsibility in decision-making.

5. Firmly Rejecting Imposing Opinions but Remaining Dialogical

In situations where the child tries to impose their opinion, parents maintain their position with clear arguments without belittling the child. This indicator was found in all informants, particularly in informant pair 3, who explicitly demonstrated dialogic firmness, and in informant pair 2, who kept the space for dialogue open before the final decision was confirmed. Informant pair 1 also showed a similar pattern through the assertion of rules accompanied by normative reasons. This shows a balance between authority and dialogue among all pairs of informants. According to Wood (2013), assertive communication enables individuals to maintain their personal rights and values without violating others' rights.

These findings indicate that the assertiveness of Batak culture in this study is more normative and argumentative than repressive, reflecting a parenting approach based on reasoning rather than coercion. This pattern can be further understood through the lens of interpersonal communication competence, where effective communication is not merely about message delivery but also about balancing clarity, empathy, and relational sensitivity (DeVito, 2016). This distinction

is particularly important in avoiding the common misinterpretation of direct communication as authoritarian behavior. While authoritarian communication tends to rely on control, obedience, and limited dialogue, assertive communication emphasizes clarity, mutual understanding, and respect for the interlocutor. In this study, Batak parents demonstrate that firmness does not necessarily equate to domination but can instead function as a structured, value-oriented form of guidance. This clarification contributes to a more nuanced understanding of parenting communication, especially in cultural contexts where directness is often misunderstood. It suggests that communication styles should not be evaluated solely on surface expressions such as tone or intensity, but also on the message's intention, structure, and relational impact.

At the micro-interaction level, these findings reveal that assertive communication is constructed through everyday conversational practices rather than isolated communicative acts. Reasoning, questioning, and emotional expression occur in routine interactions, such as discussing daily responsibilities, responding to children's requests, and addressing behavioral issues. This indicates that assertive communication is not situational but habitual, embedded in repeated patterns of interaction that gradually shape children's understanding of norms and expectations. Such consistency strengthens the internalization of values, as children experience communication not as sporadic control, but as a continuous process of guidance.

In this context, Batak parents demonstrate communicative competence by integrating firmness with emotional awareness, enabling them to maintain authority while preserving relational harmony. Furthermore, the presence of dialogic interaction across all informants suggests that assertive communication functions as a mediating mechanism between control and autonomy. Children are positioned not as passive recipients of rules but as active participants in meaning-making processes within the family. This finding reinforces the argument that family communication patterns play a critical role in shaping children's cognitive and emotional development (Rahmah, 2018). In a broader developmental context, assertive communication not only regulates children's behavior but also contributes to the formation of key psychological traits. Children raised in such communication environments tend to develop higher levels of self-regulation, as they are consistently exposed to structured reasoning and clear behavioral expectations. In addition, open dialogue encourages critical thinking, as children are invited to reflect on the consequences of their actions rather than merely comply with parental authority.

This finding aligns with psychological perspectives that emphasize the role of family interaction in shaping cognitive and emotional development (Suciati, 2019). Through repeated exposure to rational and dialogic communication, children gradually internalize values such as responsibility, discipline, and respect, which later manifest in their social behavior.

Based on the research findings, indicators of an assertive communication style include firm, corrective, and appreciative statements; emotional openness; rational rejection; clarification before approval; and firmness in maintaining opinions without belittling the child. This communication style shows that the communication of Batak ethnic parents not only functions as behavioral control but also as an educational mechanism in character formation. Firmness accompanied by appreciation clarifies norms while maintaining the child's self-esteem (Alberti & Emmons, 2017), and correlates with improved emotional regulation and self-confidence in interpersonal relationships (Speed et al., 2018).

Openness in expressing feelings of pride, disappointment, and worry reflects emotional expressiveness that strengthens children's affective bonds and empathy (Burleson, 2010). The ability to say "no" in an argumentative way emphasizes the main characteristic of assertive communication: upholding rights without damaging relationships (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976). The tendency to discuss before decisions are made indicates a conversational orientation within the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006), in which authority is exercised dialogically rather than repressively (Wood, 2013). Overall, these findings reinforce the idea that assertive communication is a key component of effective parenting, as it integrates clarity, emotional expression, and rational discussion into a cohesive interaction pattern.

The interaction of internal and external factors influences the dominance of this assertive style. Internally, self-confidence and communication skills enable individuals to express thoughts

and emotions openly (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). Externally, Batak cultural norms that value assertiveness as a form of honesty legitimize direct communication (Gudykunst & Kim, 2017). Additionally, through social learning, communication styles are formed from experiences and models observed within the family (Bandura, 1977). Strong emotional relationships and a discussio oriented family environment also reinforce open communication practices (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006), while awareness of the value of effective communication encourages a rational approach to parenting (DeVito, 2016). Thus, the assertive communication style in this study is the result of the interaction of psychological capacity, cultural values, social experiences, and family relationship dynamics, which together shape a firm yet dialogic communication style in character development. This also suggests that assertive communication does not emerge spontaneously but is shaped through continuous interaction between individual capacities and the socio-cultural environment in which the family operates.

Based on previous findings, the dominance of the assertive communication style in this study is not only understood as an empirically observed interaction pattern but also as the result of various factors that shape how parents communicate with their children. The assertive style develops through the interaction between individual internal factors and external socio-cultural factors.

1. Internal Factor: Self-Confidence and Communication Skills

This factor was found in all pairs of informants. In the first pair of informants, self-confidence was evident when the parents conveyed rules directly without hesitation and consistently offered appreciation. In the case of informant pair 2, communication skills were evident in the way the parents explained the impact of the child's choices without blaming, as the child stated that the parents "never blamed, but explained the shortcomings of the choice." Meanwhile, in the case of informant pair 3, self-confidence was apparent when the parents firmly stated, "you cannot buy a refrigerator, it is better to use the money for something else," accompanied by a rational reason. According to Alberti & Emmons (2017), individuals with high self-confidence tend to express their thoughts and set boundaries openly without aggression or withdrawal. The findings in all three couples indicate that this psychological capacity serves as the main foundation for assertive communication.

2. Factors of Cultural Norms and Batak Social Values.

Cultural factors were found to be strong in informant pairs 1 and 3 and, implicitly, in informant pair 2. In informant pair 3, the parents explicitly mentioned that "Batak people prioritize discipline first before responsibility." This statement shows that firmness is understood as a normative cultural value rather than a form of dominance. In the case of informant pair 1, the direct communication pattern also reflects a cultural character that values honesty and openness. Gudykunst & Kim (2017) explain that culture influences communication styles through collective values legitimized within the family. In this context, parental firmness is not perceived as symbolic violence, but rather as a form of moral responsibility.

3. Factors of Social Learning Experience and Parenting.

This factor was found in all pairs of informants. In the case of informant pair 3, the parent emphasized that they only dared to reprimand if they also did the same, such as the obligation to pray and recite the Quran. This shows the presence of modeling behavior, where communication is not just in the form of instructions, but also as an example. In the case of informant pair 2, the child mentioned that the parents leave life choices to the child and only appear when the child complains, indicating a learning pattern through experience. Bandura (1977) explains that communication styles are formed through the observation and imitation of significant models. In this study, children not only receive rules but also observe their parents' consistent behavior as a reference.

4. Factors of Emotional Relationships and Family Discussion Orientation.

These factors were consistently found in informant pairs 2 and 3, and partially in informant pair 1. In informant pair 2, the child mentioned that when there is a difference of opinion, "the parents explain the impact and never blame." Decisions are often revisited in the next meeting. In the

case of informant pair 3, the parents stated that before agreeing to a request, they always ask for the reason first and consider whether the request is reasonable. Even in disagreements, "the child is still given space to express their opinion." Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006) refer to this communication style as conversation orientation, which is the tendency of families to encourage the exchange of ideas before making decisions. These findings indicate that authority is exercised dialogically.

5. Factor of Value Awareness and Communication Education.

This factor appears in all pairs of informants. In the pairs of informants 1 and 3, the parents stated that before advising their children, they consider the impact, even "thought about beforehand except for fatal matters." In the pair of informants 2, the child mentioned that feelings of disappointment were not immediately expressed during high emotions, but rather after being thot about for several days. DeVito (2016) explains that effective communication requires awareness of timing, message, and its emotional impact. This indicates that the assertive style in this study is not an impulsive reaction, but rather the result of rational consideration.

In addition, these factors do not operate in isolation but reinforce one another in shaping communication practices. Cultural values that emphasize firmness are internalized through social learning processes and later expressed through confident communication behavior. At the same time, emotional closeness within the family creates a safe environment for assertive communication, ensuring that firmness is not perceived as a threat. This interplay indicates that assertive communication is a dynamic construct shaped through the interaction of personal beliefs, cultural expectations, and relational experiences. It also confirms that family communication is inherently embedded within a broader socio-cultural context (Gudykunst & Kim, 2017)

The assertive communication style observed in this study can be understood as a culturally embedded practice rather than merely an individual preference. In Batak culture, directness and firmness are closely associated with honesty, responsibility, and moral integrity, shaping parents not only as authority figures but also as moral guides. As a result, communication is not intended to suppress the child but to instill discipline through clarity and consistency, reinforcing the role of cultural values in defining appropriate communication within the family.

Based on these findings, internal factors, cultural norms, social learning experiences, emotional relationships, and awareness of communication values collectively shape a parenting style that is both firm and dialogical. Psychological capacity enables open expression, cultural values legitimize assertiveness, social experiences reinforce learned behaviors, and emotional relationships provide space for discussion, while communication awareness directs interactions toward rationality. These interconnected factors highlight that parenting communication is a dynamic process, influenced by both internal dispositions and external cultural frameworks that evolve through everyday interaction.Thus, the dominance of assertive communication in this study reflects the convergence of psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. In the context of contemporary social changes, where children are increasingly exposed to diverse sources of information and influence, the role of assertive communication becomes even more relevant. Parents are no longer the sole source of authority, making it essential to adopt communication approaches that are not only directive but also dialogic and adaptive.

This convergence produces a communication pattern characterized by clarity, rational argumentation, and respect for the child's position in the character-building process.The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Assertive communication provides a framework that allows parents to maintain their authority while still engaging children in meaningful dialogue. This approach helps children develop the ability to navigate complex social environments, where critical thinking and emotional regulation are increasingly important.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce the relevance of interpersonal communication theory in understanding family dynamics. Assertive communication reflects a balance between self-expression and relational maintenance, which is a core principle of effective interpersonal interaction (DeVito, 2016). Furthermore, integrating cultural values into communication practices demonstrates that assertiveness is not a universal construct but is shaped by specific cultural norms and values. This highlights the importance of incorporating

cultural perspectives into family communication studies, particularly in diverse societies such as Indonesia.

Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for parents and educators in applying communication strategies that balance firmness and empathy. By adopting assertive communication, parents can foster children's independence, emotional intelligence, and responsibility without relying on authoritarian approaches. Beyond the family context, the findings of this study also have broader social implications. Assertive communication practices within the family may contribute to the development of individuals who are more capable of engaging in constructive dialogue in wider social environments. This is particularly relevant in contemporary society, where communication skills are essential for navigating complex interpersonal and professional interactions. Therefore, promoting assertive communication at the family level can be seen as an early foundation for building a more dialogic and respectful society. In addition, this study provides insights for future research to further explore communication styles across different ethnic groups, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how culture influences parenting practices.

## 4. Conclusion

This research aims to explain how the communication style of Batak ethnic parents shapes their children's character. Based on the results of qualitative analysis of three pairs of informants, it was found that the dominant communication style is assertive. This communication style is characterize by assertiveness in conveying rules, openness in expressing feelings, rational rejection, and a dialog space before decision-making. These findings indicate that the assertiveness inherent in the Batak cultural construct is not necessarily expressed through aggressive or authoritarian communication, but rather through argumentative and dialogical communication. Parents maintain their authority, but they exercise it through logical explanations, clarifications, and a balance between control and affection. The implications of this assertive communication pattern are evident in the formation of a child's character, which tends to be disciplined, responsible, rational, and aware of family norms and values.

Furthermore, this study found that the dominance of an assertive communication style does not stand alone; the interaction of various internal and external factors influences it. Internal factors, such as self-confidence and parental communication skills, enable the delivery of messages assertively while still respecting the child's position. Meanwhile, external factors such as Batak cultural norms that view assertiveness as a moral responsibility, the process of social learning within the family, and a discussion-oriented approach that provides space for dialogue also strengthen the practice of assertive communication. Parents' awareness of the importance of effective communication in children's education also supports the development of a rational, reflective pattern of message delivery.

Thus, this research emphasizes that assertive communication styles within Batak ethnic families positively contribute to children's character formation through mechanisms of communicative assertiveness grounded in cultural and religious values, while also being influenced by interwoven psychological, social, and cultural dynamics. This research enriches the study of family communication by offering a local cultural perspective and demonstrating that interpersonal communication approaches cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context in which they occur. In the context of rapid social change and increasing communication complexity, the role of family communication becomes even more significant. This study highlights that assertive communication is not only relevant within the family setting but also essential in preparing children to navigate broader social interactions effectively.

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