

# Family Communication Patterns of Indonesian Migrant Workers, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara

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**ABSTRACT.** Many Indonesians work as Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) abroad, most of them are from Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, East Lombok district in particular. Becoming a migrant worker means being ready to leave your beloved family and closest people in your hometown to pursue a career in another country. Being separated by distances affects the communication process that occurs between workers and their families in their hometowns. This research will analyze family communication patterns that carried out by the families of Indonesian migrant workers using a phenomenological approach using qualitative descriptive methods. Specifically, this research will analyze the family's communication patterns before, during and after they work as migrant worker. The results shows that the family communication pattern carried out by Indonesian Migrant Workers from Jenggik Utara Village, East Lombok Regency, classified into three phases, namely the 'initial' phase of wanting to become a migrant worker, the 'during' phase when they actually work abroad, and the 'after' phase when they no longer being a migrant worker. Where overall they carry out primary communication patterns in the 'initial' phase and 'after' phase, while secondary communication patterns in the 'during' phase. Furthermore, the family relationship scheme that they implement is a consensual scheme, with a high level of conversation orientation and conformity, so the family members are open to each other in making decisions together, whether they want to leave the country to serve as migrant worker, or provide opportunities for their children to freely choose the path they will take in life in the future.

**KEYWORDS:** communication patterns; family communication; Indonesian Migrant Workers

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a society whose work orientation is quite diverse, some work in the agricultural sector, are teachers, office workers and so on. Among the various fields of work, there is one profession that many people are involved in, namely working as Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) abroad.

Based on data from the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI), the total number of Indonesian workers abroad is 122,870 people, as of September 2022. A total of 8,870 people are migrant workers from West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province. This number is the fourth highest after East Java, Central Java and West Java (Paulus, 2022). The majority of migrant workers from NTB province come from East Lombok Regency, namely 235,821 people (Prabawati, 2022).

As a migrant worker working abroad, you certainly have your own challenges. Apart from physical preparation, mental preparation must also be very thorough because becoming a migrant worker means being ready to leave your beloved family and closest people in your hometown to try your luck in another country. Being separated by long distances affects the communication process that occurs between workers and their families in their hometowns. If communication is inconsistent, it has the potential to cause various family problems and even cause divorce for married couples (Miladiyanto, 2016).

The author wants to analyze the family communication patterns carried out by Indonesian migrant workers when they communicate their motivation to work as migrant workers to their families, during their serverd abroad, and after they are no longer serve as migrant workers.

As a definition, communication patterns according to Effendy (in Gunawan, 2013) are processes designed to represent the reality of the interrelationship of the elements covered and their

continuity, in order to facilitate systematic and logical thinking. Communication patterns are divided into primary, secondary, linear and circular patterns. Furthermore, through this communication pattern we will see the family relationship scheme carried out by migrant workers. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick, family communication does not occur randomly but is patterned based on certain schemes in determining how family members communicate with each other. This scheme is based on knowledge about how close the family is, how much individuality there is between family members, as well as factors from outside the family such as friends, work environment, distance and so on. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014)

This family scheme then forms a certain communication orientation, which divided into two types, namely *conversation orientation* and *conformity orientation*. Moreover, these two orientations define the family relationship scheme into four, namely *consensual*; *pluralistic*; *protective*; and *laissez-faire* or *tolerant*. A consensual family is a type of family with a high level of conversational orientation and conformity, so it can be said that family members often talk, and usually one parent is the family leader in making decisions. A pluralistic family is a type of family with a high level of conversation orientation, but low on conformity orientation, so that in conversations family members have freedom, but each individual will make their own decisions. A protective family is a type of family with a low level of conversation orientation, but high in conformity, so that there will be more compliance and less communication. A tolerant or laissez-faire family is a type of family with a low level of conversation orientation and conformity, where this family does not like to interfere and does not want to be involved in various problems or activities carried out by other family members. (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014)

## 2 METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. Where this research will obtain descriptive data in the form of words and images. In line with what Moleong (2007) said, the data obtained in qualitative research is in the form of words, images, not numbers. This research uses a phenomenological approach, according to Watt and Berg (1995) phenomenology is a method that reveals individual experiences and their meaning. The data in this research are collected through non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with migrant workers and their families in East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Researchers have interviewed six informants who are former Indonesian migrant workers.

## 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Researchers analyzed and divided the family communication patterns carried out by migrant workers in Jenggik Utara village, East Lombok into 3 (three) phases, namely the 'initial' phase of wanting to become a migrant worker, the 'during' phase when they actually work abroad, and the 'after' phase when they no longer being a migrant worker.

### The 'Initial' Phase

The residents of Jenggik Utara village decided to become migrant workers abroad as a whole on average due to economic factors, in this case wanting to generate more income compared to their previous job, in order to fulfill their family's basic needs, including building a better place to live and to send their children to school.

Seeing the unstable economic conditions of their families encouraged the informants to pursue their career abroad, and this was fully supported by their family members especially their wives and children, even though at that time the informants and their families did not have much information or knowledge regarding the process to become a migrant worker abroad. They finally discussed and considered the opportunities and risks they would face when they left to become migrant workers, leaving their entire family, especially their wife and children at home.

The discussions carried out by these informants showed that the communication pattern they used in the initial phase was the primary communication pattern by directly conveying their motivation or reasons for wanting to become a migrant worker with their partner or family through direct face-to-face conversations.

The openness of communication between families in discussions and giving blessings to informants going abroad provides a picture of a consensual family relationship scheme in accordance

with the family relationship scheme theory by Koerner and Fitzpatrick, where a consensual family is a type of family with a high level of conversation orientation and conformity, so that it can be said that family members often talk and discuss with each other, and value open communication in interactions between family members (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014).

### **The ‘During’ Phase**

After finally reaching an agreement with the family, the informants finally went abroad to start working. At this time the second phase begins where the informants adapt not only to the living conditions of a foreign country, but also in carrying out their role as parents of children, or as husbands or wives who are no longer able to communicate directly. The informant usually acts as the head of the household (father) when in his hometown, but due to distance and time, his role as father and head of the household must be handed over to his partner (wife) or other family members.

Apart from sending money to their hometowns as a form of attention and communication to their families, the informants also used various communication media to help them maintain healthy family communication amidst their busy work lives, such as using digital telecommunications media.

The experiences of the informants above in utilizing intermediary media or tools such as letters, smartphones and social media (WhatsApp) or other digital devices, provide a clear picture that the communication patterns used by migrant workers when leaving and working abroad have changed to secondary communication patterns, where they rely on intermediary media or tools to be able to communicate with their partners and family in their hometown, either by letters, telephone calls, video calls, or simply by sending money to family as a form of communication.

Even though the communication pattern implemented has changed slightly from direct to indirect (using media), the family relationship scheme implemented has not changed, namely the consensual family scheme which remains open to each other, conveying attention to each other, which shows that the orientation of the conversation between them is not reduce.

### **The ‘After’ Phase**

The success of fulfill the family's needs through the income earned while being a migrant worker does not make the informants want to work and live abroad forever and not return to their home with their family. Because basically, the informants want to rebuild their village further.

Even though it cannot be denied that the salary earned as a migrant worker is very large and promising, but the hardship of living in another country with the various challenges and life trials that they have experienced, in the end leaves quite deep trauma scars so that on average the informants don't want their children to have the same fate as them. However, despite their concerns, the informants admitted that they were still open if their children, when they were old enough, wanted to build a career in whatever suits their interests and abilities.

The experience that the informants provided shows that they are returning to primary communication patterns (direct and face-to-face discussions) and a consensual family scheme, where despite the trauma they have become migrant workers which is quite difficult and some of them do not allow their children to continue in their parents' footsteps by becoming a migrant worker, they remain open and provide opportunities for their children to choose for themselves how they will earn income in the future, although in the end there are some of them who want to become migrant workers following what their parents went through.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out and the analysis that has been described in the discussion, it can be concluded that the family communication patterns carried out by Indonesian Workers in Jenggik Utara Village, East Lombok are primary and secondary communication patterns, where the primary patterns occur in the ‘initial’ and ‘after’ phases, while the secondary pattern occurs in ‘during’ phase when they served as a migrant worker. Apart from that, the family relationship scheme that occurs in each migrant worker's family is a consensual scheme, in which their family members are open to each other in making joint decisions, both when they want to go abroad, while on

duty and away from their hometown, also provide opportunities for their children to freely choose the path they will take in life in the future.

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