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The Construction of A Family Communication Relationship in The Digital Era in Order to Create A Happy, Loving and Supportive (*Sakinah, Mawaddah, Warohmah*) Family

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Abstract: Family communication relationship is an important component to achieve ideal Islamic family goals, a *sakinah, mawaddah, warohmah (samara)* or a happy, loving and supportive family in this digital era. Because the relation within the family has a huge effect in shaping these family goals, without a relevant communication, especially in this digital era, the relation would be disruptive and the family goals would be utterly unattainable. This is the main reason why this subject has to be studied and reviewed. Critics - constructive analysis towards several books and journals is conducted so then the construction of a family communication relationship which is suitable with these family goals, in this turbulence digital era, emerges. In the end, result of this study shows that the construction of equal – andapolite - relationship, with the consensual - traditional type of relationship is accepted.

Keywords: *family communication relationship, relevant communication, equal-andapolite, consensual-traditional*

A. Introduction

Family is the smallest society which consists of parents and children, it is where the first and the most primary site in people's journey. It is then the family would be the basic foundation in constructing the future generation (Shihab, 1997: 210).

Family has a strategic role to determine the life goal of a person. Through the member of a family, they will live a life together. Norms, rights and responsibility has to be implemented to achieve a happy, loving and supportive family condition.

In Islam, there's a concept of an ideal family, famously *sakinah, mawaddah dan warohmah (samara)* or happy, loving and supportive family which only could be achieved through a marriage. Moreover, *samara* family is a concept of a well-being, both physically and mentally, and so the member of the family would be avoided from threats and despair.

Many considered that living in a digital era could be challenging to this family future

goal. Social media for example, is become an alternative media to communicate among family. There's a tendency that in some case there's a lack of guilty feeling when some of the family member using social media to replace a direct and face to face communication. This replacement, could be far more disruptive, because there would be a lesser time to communicate among the member, other that video games is time-consuming for children, and it also make them become more individualized.

Social media changes the family communication pattern from *equal-andapolite relationship* (Morissan, 2013: 285) or open and intimate into *anequal - andapolite relationship* or close - formal relationship. This changing affects towards physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs and fulfillment of the family that leads to disharmony and even divorce. Throughout 2017, as reported by Kompas media in Bekasi, a place near Jakarta capitol according to its religious court, there are

1.826 divorce cases with affair background, and the use of social media is allegedly become the main cause of this high rate. It seems that due to the excessive use of social media, there are plenty of misunderstandings, the relation between husband and wife is disrupted, and it makes rights and responsibilities violated.

This condition gives an alarming message that communication is the center in a family life. From good communication, intimacy, trust and love would be constructed. And because of that, the construction of a family communication relationship is relevant with the life in the digital era.

B. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

This research is a library research. The source would be from books, journals or some previous similar researches. The family communication theory is the thought-base. The projection of this research is the construction of the family communication relationship towards Islamic family concept of *samara* or a happy, loving and supportive family in a digital era.

2. Nature of the Research

Nature of this research is qualitative with narrative - descriptive approach. Researcher would explain through a critical analytical style from the basis theory and thoughts (Milles & Huberman, 1999: 134). Analysis is conducted through a constructive approach, which constructing data from theory to seek a formula and results.

3. Research Instrument

First instrument of this research is documentations from books, journals and previous similar researches. Second instrument is observation, which is conducted towards several social media users located in various places such as hospitals, university, and local market. And the thirdly would be interview and focus group discussion with active social media users

4. Primary Data

Primary data in this research are books, journals and previous result from similar family communication research.

5. Secondary Data

Secondary data of this research are from interview and observation data.

6. Data Analysis

Data from this research is analyzed with deductive, inductive and triangulation techniques. Deductive is an inquiry process in drawing conclusions which formed in specific principles and attitudes based on a general fact. Conversely, inductive is an inquiry process to draw general conclusion from specific principles and attitudes facts. (Moleong, 2009: 330)

C. The Discussion

1. Description

The term *construction*, is often interpreted as a form and a building. Also, construction viewed as an effort to build a specific building (Wahyu, 2017: 23). As for this scientific point of view and interest, family communication is also viewed as a construction. Family communication consists from two words, communication and family. Communication is originated from Latin word, *communis*, which means "common" (West & Turner, 2008, : 4). In this case "communication" is a process, "to make common". Furthermore from the terminology, communication is a social process in which individuals employ symbols to establish and interpret meaning in their environment (West & Turner, 2008: 5). According to James A. Anderson, basically communication is a dynamic process which includes communicator, communicant, methods, message and effect with certain objectives. Redi Panuju, one of Indonesian communication scholar explains that communication is also a moment in implementing certain missions, one of it's mission is to construct a happy, loving and supportive family through communication relationship.

Family is a place to communicate in terms of delivering message from a family member to one another. Communication within the family is characterized by open, intense, deep, warm and close characteristics. This communication model is only occurred within the family, and so it is often described as a primary group. Family communication is also eliminating many boundaries such as differences, egoism, personal secret, interest and distance. It is developed from blood and legal ties and so as the loyalty, agreement, love, and sincerity. Family communication, according to LePoire is defined as “*messages that are typically sent with intent, that are typically perceived as intentional, and that have consensually shared meaning among individuals who are related biologically, legally, or through marriage-like commitments and who nurture and control each other*” (LePoire, 2005:3). In simple words, family communication is the way family interacts with each other and also a place where values are constructed and developed which is very much required on projecting people’s way of life.

There are several things affecting family communication. First is the self-image and others. Self-imagery is related with our own concept of self, and also concepts towards our spouse, children and families. This concept manifested in our judgment towards families including physical, psychological, social and spiritual. Meaning, if we have a good conception, both for our self and our family, then our behavior and attitude would be aligned. It’s because self-conception has an effect towards behavior and thus determines family communication’s quality.

Self-concept is a result from symbolic interactionism captured by our senses including sights, hearing, feeling and touch. Through this senses, family will construct its self-conception and others according to its meaning.

There are ways to build self-concept and other (Rakhmat, 1997: 115). First,

learn from personal strengths and weaknesses. Second, accept other’s strengths and weaknesses. Third, try to learn emotional, social and spiritual intelligent. Fourth, learn to have autonomous-self: physically, psychologically and socially and fifth, improving self-quality by long life learning.

After self-image and others, factors that affecting family communication is physical environment. Surrounding environment including technology, climate, facilities and habitation factors (geographical, mountains, rural, urban), could affect perspectives, attitudes and family behavior.

Technological family base will have different cognition, affection and motor skill than non-technological family base. As in rural base versus urban base family which also have many differences including norms and values, sacredness and sanctity in a family. This reason explains why an environment factor affects the construction of a family communication relationship.

After self-image and physical environment, third factor that have an effect on family communication is psychological environment. Related with inner person, this environment has connection with intention, desire, hope, motivation, experience and faith. This aspect is also has an influence on communication format in which developed within the family. There are also differences in terms of the communication construction, willingness and expectations which is certainly different from families who do not have a high expectation. This aspect is important to be explored and communicated with the couple, so that couples and family as a whole will recognize and developed a suitable communication patterns. The failure of the communication within the family is sometimes due to the failure of communicating hopes, ideals, dreams and needs openly.

Fourth factor is leadership. Leadership is define as a process of influencing others in a sense of accomplishing the family goal. Due to the involvement of power and authority, this leadership is quite effective in directing spouses and children. The style of leadership will determine the direction of communication and interaction within the family. For example, democratic style of leadership will create a different form of interaction compared with the authoritarian style of leadership.

Fifth, language ethics. This ethics is the manner of speech practising by the member within the family. A good family tends to have insights in choosing good words and sentences. Family-based language ethics relies on the language that is polite, courteous, honest, open, deep and broad type of language, meanwhile messages are delivered lightly, simply and easily digested.

Sixth, age Differences. This age differences give distance in the degree of proximity and intimacy within the family. Age differences in the family will affect the pattern of communication relation between members of the family.

2. Communication Relation

Communication relation is a form of a relationship in a message interaction process. The relationship itself refers to a process which developed by either the communicator and the communicant during communication took place (Bachtar, M. Anis, 2013: 15)

Relationship, quoted by Morissan from Longman Dictionary defines as “the way in which two people or two groups feel about each and behave toward each other (Mubarok, Suci Husnaeni, 2012: 14). Relationship in other words is more of an empathetic feeling towards others. Relations, furthermore is a partnership which gives immediate or delayed feedback according to the media. According to Littlejohn, there are several dimensions in relationship, a relation could be easy and fun, but also could be hard and difficult resulting in uninterested and awkward moment

(Morrison; 281). As Judy C. Pearson (1983) arguments, there are four components inside the relations, first is self, secondly meaning in communication messages, third, interpersonal relationship and fourth, physical proximity. These components characterized structure of communication relation of a family.

Quoted from George Bateson, dominant-submissive relationship, equal-andapolite relationship, and complementary relationship are important on interpersonal relationship (Morrison: 281)

In Dominant-submissive relationship, one party dominates the other. This interaction formed in a hierarchy, superior and subordinates' pattern, one party has a higher position over the other party. This relation implemented in formal power, informative, legal or coercion in order to be effectively implementing reward and punishment

Equal-andapolite relationship is mentally equal relationship. It is closer, no opposition between one another. Both parties have the same rights and obligations, and thus completing each other. There is no tendency that one party has more power over the others. This relation appears in romantic relationship, friendship and marriage Complementary relationship happens if a communicator gives opposites or different responses feedback in communication. The relationship is not necessarily reinforcing but there is bonding and closeness between two parties. The relation tends to be independent and rational (Morissan; 281).

3. Digital Family Model

Communication is basic for human, it conveys through audio and visual messages such as text, pictures and so forth. Primary communication allows communicant to give immediate feedback yet secondary gives a delayed feedback back to communicator.

Digital media is technologically and mostly internet based. It characterized by the acceleration and speed, various applications, accuracy which gives many alternatives in addressing communication goals (Stanley J. Baran, Dennis K. Davis, 2014:124).

According to Mary Anne Fitzpatrick on Family Patterns Communication Theory, Family communication is not random, but expressed in pattern based on certain schemes which determine how member of a family communicates. This scheme consists of 1. Degree of intimacy inside the family. 2. Degree of individuality in a family 3. External factors such as friends, distance, geographical and occupation.

There are two important orientation in a family, first is conversation orientation and secondly conformity orientation. These two orientations have conversational and conformity schemes. Family with high conversation orientation will spend a lot of time interacting, they share their individual activities, thoughts, and feelings with each other. Conversely, in low conversation orientation, members will interact less frequently with each other, family members look more individualistic. These family orientations, gives a different and distinctive Communication pattern.

Family orientations create different type of families. Mary Anne Fitzpatrick identified four types of family: 1. Consensual-type, 2. Pluralistic, 3. Protective 4. Laissez- Faire. Each type has a certain type of parents which are determined by the ways they are using their space, time, energy and degree in expressing feeling, also the philosophical understanding of the marriage. In this case, there are three types of marriages: 1. Traditional, 2. Independent, 3. Separate. Each type of this marriage behaves in different ways.

Consensual type is a family which is very often involved in conversations but also has a high obedience. Parents in these families are very interested in their

children and what the children have to say, but at the same time also believe that they, as the parents, they should make decisions for the family and for the children. (Fitzpatrick, 2006; 51). Parents of this type, tend to be traditionalists in their marital orientation. This means that they tend to be conventional marriage institution point of view, emphasizing more on stability and capacity than diversity and spontaneity. This family type also has a great sense of dependence and often spends time together. Although there is no indication of having differences, but they also do not avoid conflict. According to Fitzpatrick the wife in the family likes to use her husband's name behind her name. Both husband and wife are very often seen together and they have a very sensitive feeling about an affair. They often design a schedule of activities together and try to spend as much time together and usually do not have a separate room to do their own work.

In the traditional type of marriage, it seems that there is not much conflict. It is because power and decision-making are divided according to the general norms. They have a division of authority according to the existing agreement; thus, long negotiation is not required. They tend to support their opinions for the good of their relationships from the interplay of each other's arguments. Traditional couples are very expressive and open in showing their feelings, either good feelings, or their frustration. This is why, they valued open communication which generates a traditional type of a family.

On the pluralistic type of the family, frequent conversation is demonstrated but also low compliance. Family members of this type often speak openly but everyone in the family will make their own decisions. Parents do not need to control their children because every opinion is based on the virtues of goodness. The best opinion emerges by participating all family members in decision making process. Marriage

orientation in this type is more non-conventional, independent and does not have conventional views on the marriage. Husband, wife and children are given independence to conduct all manner of behavior freely. They do not depend on each other. Couples have a shared opportunity to be open but also, they have friends, hobbies and groups of organizations that are separate from each other. In fact, they valued the economical capacity of each other and often have separate rooms for doing their jobs, autonomously.

Since the pluralistic family has an unconventional point of views, couple inside this family are tend to have negotiations constantly. Independent couples usually have many conflicts, husbands and wives often fight for power, they often use a variety of persuasive techniques and do not hesitate to drop their opponent's arguments. But as the traditional couples type, independent partners are also expressive. They will always respond to any non-verbal codes from their partner, and understanding their partner's intention perfectly. In short, this family type is also appreciating an open communication.

This third family type is a protective type of family that rarely engages in conversations but has a high obedience. There is obedience in the family but few in communication. This type of family does not hold important conversations and chats that time-wasted, and they also do not have to explain the decisions they have made. In that case, marital orientation the couple is defined as separate marriage orientation. This couple, illustrated by Morissan, is unsure of their roles and relationships. They have a conventional view of marriage, but they are not interdependent and spend less time together. Fitzpatrick calls this couple emotionally divorced. Couples in separate type have persistent views and opinion, the conflict does not last long as they quickly withdraw from the conflict.

They do not have enough time-capacity to be survived from the conflict. There are few attempts to hold the obedience by using the relationships but often saying bad things if their partner is not obedient. Couples of this type have a caring attitude. They ask a lot of questions but rarely give suggestions. They do not have an expressive attitude toward their feelings and they also do not understand their spouses perfectly.

The family type of *laissez faire*s is a type has a low involvement, low obedience level and rarely engages in conversation. Family members of this type are less concerned with what other family member's activities and do not want to waste their time discussing. Couples with this model have a mixed marriage orientation, meaning they do not have the same scheme on which their interaction is based on. They have orientations that are a combination of separate and independent orientations or other combinations. And according to Fitzpatrick about 40% of all the subjects in the study, indicate a number of combinations of several types, which are: separate-traditional, traditional-independent, and independent-separate

Digital media has become an alternative communication media of many families in this modern era. Through digital media, families today have more space and time in information sharing model towards others. They tend to be more open and expressive on many subjects including personal issues, experiences, feeling, hopes, anger and disappointment. Digital people on social media seems to be more satisfied and happier if what is written, read and sent on digital media can be read and commented by others. It is seemingly become an active social media user has a connection with the higher self-esteem and happiness.

Attachment to the digital media has a negative effect; the more likely the more they era tend to violate the norms. The nature and characteristics of the virtual world is that they do not bring

togetherness among individuals, meanwhile in group communication context, it encourages the loss of norms, morals, ethics, manners, responsibility and also ethics in communication.

Another impact of digital media is the shifting pattern in family communication relation, from warm, open into formal and impersonal communication pattern. This shift appears when family communication is no longer conducted in direct and intense form. Other than that, the form of nonverbal communication with no longer involves physical touch such as joking, chatting, chatting, sharing problems which usually happens in the living room by drinking tea or coffee with the nuclear family.

4. Kelurga Samara

Concept of ideal family in Islam is *sakinah, mawaddah dan waorhmah* or popular by abbreviation, *samara*. In *Samara*, members of the family will have physical and inner well-being. There are numerous Islamic figure whose became a model of this samara family model, includes: Prophet Adam and Eve, Moses and Shafur, Ali bin Abi Tholib and Fatimah R.A and the last but not least prophet Muhammad SAW himself and Khodijah.

The concept of marriage and building a family is to unify many differences: age for example, family background, educational experience, life-style and family orientation in the future. Differences is indeed provoked the existence of conflict and problems, and because the dynamic inside the, they have to be ready with the challenges and temptations so that the family foundation would be firm and stable. There are several functions of family, first, reproductive function; second, economic function; third, social function; fourth; protective function; fifth; recreational function; sixth, affective and seventh, religious function.

Quranic Arrum (30;21) mentioned "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may

find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thoughts"

The Word *Sakinah* comes from Arabic *sakana, yaskunu, sakinatan* which means peace, tranquility, happiness that surrounds the heart of the couple during being in the bonds of marriage. From this tranquility, happiness, peace, will bring a sense of love, a noble love that encourages couples to be responsible with their rights and duties.

Mawaddah comes from the Arabic language derived from the letter m, w, d, d whose meaning revolves around the spaciousness, and emptiness. *Mawaddah* is the spaciousness (of the feeling) and the emptiness (of the soul) and so it would be sparred from the bad will (Shihab, 1997: 208). It is a sincere love, which would be not diminished as could happen to people who make love. This because *mawaddah's* heart is so roomy and so emptied from ugliness, so that the doors have been closed to the infamous birth (M. Quraish Shihab, 1997: 209)..

Warrahmah is a psychological condition which emerges from the inner-heart due to witnessing helplessness from significant other, it is to encourage another party in a couple to empower it. Therefore, in a family life, each husband and wife will try hard to bring goodness for their partner and at the same time rejecting subjects that disturb their relationship (M. Quraish Shihab, 1997: 209).

There are several ways to have a *samara* family, divided into three stages, which are:

Primary Stage

1. increase the degree of harmony to more intimate
2. Try to make our partner happy
3. Express each other's feelings openly
4. Use free time together
5. Mutuality in sexual life
6. Effective Communication

7. Be a good listener
8. If there is a problem, communicate with the couple immediately
9. Balance between feelings and thoughts
10. Positive thinking
11. Deal the problem fairly

Secondary Phase:

The stage where the conflict has occurred :

1. Compromized,
2. Find the best solution by implementing a win-win solution method
3. Implementing the result
4. Seek an alternative solution, for example by consulting with experts
5. Evaluating the resolution.

Third phase :

1. Preventing the impact or the trauma from the conflict-related psychology.
2. Close Communication and seek for new agreements to avoid the same conflict in the future

This methods, are procedures that helps couples in the family to avoid obstacles and problems in family communication. Furthermore, there are six pillars in the *samara* family, (Yurnalis, 2014: 25), which are:

1. Financial happiness. This happiness is intended for couples to have the fulfillment of a survival needs or *haziyah* (clothing, food, shelter) for the family. the purpose of fulfilling *haziyah* is to maintain the survival of human beings, and not solely to the material fulfillment, because there is a mandate of religious teachings that humans must also maintain the *nafs* (*hifdun an-nafs*) or material lust. Secondly, the need of *dharuri*, or secondary needs such as: education, health, entertainment and vacation. The character of secondary need is that it could be postponed up until the right moment.

2. Sexual Happiness. Sexual happiness becomes the reason to someone to keep her partner, from sexual happiness will born the loveable children.

3. Spiritual happiness. Families who

have attention on religious values will be considered as a family which able to solve all the problems and obstacles in life.

4. Happiness morality. This happiness refers to the success of constructing Islamic moral inside the family.

5. Intellectual happiness. This happiness is related to '*ara* (ideas, creativity), *afkar* (thinking), *ahkam* (laws) towards Islamic *tsaqofah* (Islamic culture) and This happiness is associated with a good interest in studying the religious sciences

6. Ideological happiness. Ideological happiness is associated with the wishes and interests of the family in generating future Islamic family.

The failure in keeping the *samara* family is due to one of those six pillars is not running normally Also, these six pillars must be conducted in balance, meaning that all the pillars should be implemented in the family to establish the concept of *samara* family.

5. The Construction of a Family Communication Relation in the Digital Age in order to Create *Samara* Family

Based on the variety and features of family *samara*, we may find some principles related with the construction, such as:

First, self-concept towards the couple. This concept is important because communication relation would be carried by the couple. Couples should be positioned as partners who have good roles and responsibilities to the family. The indicator are :

- a. As individuals who shares commitment in marriage
- b. As a loyal and honest individual
- c. As a loving and caring individual
- d. As a responsible individual
- e. As individuals who are ready with the dynamics in life.
- f. As an individual, whose bounded by marriage.
- g. As an individual who has the pure intention in worshipping

- h. As individuals who has a complete understanding that problems or conflicts is constantly appears and dynamic.

Secondly, concept of self towards the family. This concept will lead in maintaining the sanctity of the family wherever the person is, including in any situation he lived. There are several indicators that could be developed, such as,

1. Family as place he live,
2. Family as a place to share stories,
3. Family as a place of worship,
4. Family as a place to make love
5. Family as a place for sharing
6. Family as a place to get entertainment
7. Family as a place to get happiness
8. Family as a place where a person spends his whole life

Third, self-concept towards others (friends). This concept becomes the part that helps in determining the family communication relation. The presence and figure of others in the midst of the family become a part in determining the sustainability of the family in the digital era today. This category of others is not a part of the primary group, but a part of the secondary group, it is not even the in-group but the out-group. Suggestion of attitudes towards these others are :

1. In communication with others, try not to enter their private territory
2. not entering the secret area
3. Not communicating in routine times
4. Does not show intimate closeness
5. Does not lead to intimacy
6. Not to provoke emotionally
7. Time - limit
8. Keep the distance
9. Avoiding hopes and promises

Fourth, self-concept on digital media. This concept is related to the trend, and there are several attitudes that can be developed in building communication relationships in today's digital age, such as :

1. Media as an educational facility
2. Media as an entertainment facility for and by the family member
3. Media as a facility to get closer to the family
4. Media as a facility to support harmony within the family
5. Media as a facility to contribute the richness of knowledge and experiences

Fifth, self-concept in a family conflict

1. Family conflict emerges because of the inequality or gap of the communication, the solution for this would be improving communication model
 2. Family conflict which emerges due to the hunger or poverty, the solution would be improving economic ability.
 3. Conflict due to misbehavior of the children, the solution is deeper discussion among family members.
 4. Conflict due to the quitter mentality, the solution is studying religion.
 5. Conflict due to idealism differences, the solution would be compromise.
- Conflict within the family should not be resulted in rifts and divorces of the family

Self- concept, could be the materials to compose the construction relation which possibly implemented towards the samara family in the digital era. The form is equal relationship andapolite-relationship which refers to its equal type of relationship. The relation is as follows:

1. Relationships which create a mutual respect in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of the partner
2. Relationships which is based on love and patience
3. Relationships that lead to solutions
4. Relationships that support the mutual help and completing

5. Open relationship with no secrets or lies
6. Relation that binds heart, mind and actions
7. Relation which upholds honor and sanctity
8. Relation which supporting progress
9. Relation which praise easily and thankful
10. Relation which is patience
11. Relation which is merciful
12. Relation which is a solution seeker
13. Relation which keeping the faith and loyalty
14. Relation which is responsible
15. Relation which maintaining rights and obligation

The relation that leads to consensual family type-with traditional marriage orientation, is the type of family that is very often engage in conversation but also has a high level of obedience to the family. Parents in these families are very interested in their children and what the children have to say, but at the same time also believe that they, as the parents, should make decisions for the family and the children. They tend to be conventional in marital institutions point of view, with emphasizing on stability and capacity than diversity and spontaneity

Families will have a great sense of dependence and often spend time together. Although they use social media to communicates with friends. But if there is a conflict, they will sit together to get it over with. This because this type will tries not to avoid conflict. They have commitment towards faithfulness and honesty. They are very often seen together, they also try to prevent affair, both husband and wife have a very sensitive feelings about infidelity and disloyalty. They will always design a schedule of activities together and try to spend as much time together and usually do not have a separate room to do their own work. Family with such a form of relation will leads to the construction of *sakinah, mawaddah, warrohmah*.

D. Conclusion

With the consensual and traditional marriage orientation, the construction of family communication relationship in digital era to be a happy, loving and supportive family could apply the equal-andapolite-relationship model. This relationship frames several structures which are rigidly conceptualized. Meaning, the relation, in reality would be appeared on mutual respect between each other, relation which leads to solution, relation which is supportive and refining, open relation with no secrets and lies, relation that ties heart, mind and action, uphold honor and sanctity. It also the relation that supportive towards progress, thankful, praise, patience, loyal, and responsible.

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