Mother-Child Communication Pattern on Awe-Awe Doer Family: A Study in Kalibaru Manis Village Banyuwangi Regency

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ABSTRACT
This research focused on describing communication pattern between mother and her young child in awe-awe doer family. The study held in Kalibaru Manis village in Banyuwangi regency, Indonesia, with descriptive qualitative methodology. There’re three mothers participated as informants, all of them are awe-awe doer and likely to bring their children when working on the street. The result shows that there are protective communication pattern in mother-young children relationship, with varied level of controlling behaviour and disciplinary techniques used in the family that depend on the importance of discipline and level of the mother’s confidence to assert discipline to the children. When awe-awe is not the main income of the family, the mother does not put much control on their children about it. Awe-awe then become unique opportunities for the children to decide for themselves.

INTRODUCTION
Family is the most important social environment during early childhood development (Santrock, 2011). Through interactions with family members, children learn to know, understand, and adapt the world they live. Experiences they have within their family also built the basic beliefs, attitudes and skills for next developmental processes.

To support children development, family have to function properly especially in fulfilling nursing and protection, affection, socialization and educational needs. But nowadays in 21st century, there lot of challenges and threats to family functioning (Galvin, 2003). To overcome those challenges and threats, family needs to be flexible. The skills of family members to communicate one to another are basic for their flexibility (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a).

Family communication can be described as a natural process of transmitting messages among family members (Runcan, Constantineanu, Ielics & Popa, 2012). In family communication, family members interactively give and receive ideas, information, emotion and feelings that are transmitted in verbal and/or non-verbal ways from one to the other. From family system perspective, family communication are basic mechanism that play a central role in
constructing and managing boundaries, family themes and rituals, shared ideas, intimacy, support and control (Miller-Day, 2017).

Family communication has a clear patterns and forms (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b, 2006). Scholars had identified these patterns and used it to make family communication typologies. There’re some advantages from divided family communication into types, i.e. the typological approach could systematically categorize some aspects of family functioning. In other words, identifying family communication pattern not only has descriptive value but also predictive power to many family processes and outcomes.

Family communication pattern is identified by two central dimensions of family communication orientation. The first is conversation orientation, that recognized by the degree to which all family members are encouraged to actively participate in unrestrained family interactions. Family with high conversation orientation spend large amount of time to interact freely and spontaneously, discuss many things and make decisions together. The second is conformity orientation, i.e. the degree family stresses on homogeneity of attitudes, values, and believes. Family with high conformity orientation tend to avoid conflicts, put obedience and interdependence of family members as central theme. Family are cohesive and hierarchical, with parents or older adults usually are the main decision maker.

These dimensions can be used to classify family communication pattern into four types, i.e. consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire families. Family with consensual communication pattern tend to maintain hierarchical status among family members but also encourage open communication. The parents act as the main decision maker but they like to discuss things openly and listen to children and other family members’ opinion. For decisions they made, the parents take time to explain the reasoning, beliefs and values so the children and other family members can understand. Family with pluralistic communication pattern treat each of family members as equal partners in decision making. They open to arguments and decide based on the best ones. Protective family communication pattern characterized by emphasis on obedience to parental authority. Children and other family members have no chance to express their opinion, nor parents’ need to explain the decision they made. Laissez-faire family have few interest in communication and involving interaction. They emotionally detached, each of family members make their own decision and get none to discuss with or support for it.

Banovcinova, Levicka & Veres (2014) found that long-term poverty have negative impacts on family communication and most of other family functioning aspects. Low income families tend to have more stress than families with standard income, with parents have lower interest to the children’s activities, more repressive attitude and punitive parenting that disrupt supportive parent-child relationship. These pattern of family communication, family relationship and family functioning are considered as the crucial mechanisms through which poverty affects child development.

Considering the importance of family communication on child development, especially with negative tendencies in low income families, this study try to illustrate further about family communication pattern in awe-awe doer family. Awe-awe here is Javanese term means “waving”. Awe-awe doer are people waving along the winding roadside of Mount Gumitir, Banyuwangi regency, to warn the drivers about road lanes and expect a dime for exchange. For such kind of activities, awe-awe doer are often considered as beggar (e.g. in Latifah, Sukidin & Ani, 2014). They come from villages near the roadside where they’re living with their families. Some of them have other jobs as farm worker or other low paid jobs.
Just like other families, low income families also have their own unique dynamics. In the family communication context, Amanda & Salim (2019) found that family income do negatively correlated with conformity orientation, but had no correlation with conversation orientation. It indicates that low income families, like awe awe doer families, possibly have varied family communication pattern, with varied possible outcome to their children development.

As a system, family consists of interrelated sub-systems, e.g. spouses, parents-children, siblings, cross-generational relationships that each of those also have their own dynamics (Bavelas & Segal, 1982). This research focused on communication pattern of parents-children sub-system, especially between mother and her young child. Despite of employment that reduce parenting time in modern era, mother is still considered as the main source of affection and psychological control that has more significant effect on children’s future behaviour (e.g. Shek, Zhu & Ma, 2018; Wachitha & Devi, 2015). In awe-awe doer family, mothers also have more time for interacting with their children rather than the fathers. They often bring their young children with them while working. Some of the children also do awe-awe, some others just play near their mother.

Based on the theories and prior studies described above, the purpose of this study is to illustrate further about the communication pattern between mother and their young children in awe-awe doer family.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive-qualitative study held in Barurejo, Kalibaru Manis villages that located on the west area of Banyuwangi regency, directly adjacent to Jember regency. Kalibaru Manis villages lies on Mount Gumitir slope so it has cool temperature and fertile soil. There’re many plantations and farmlands with cocoa, coffee, corn, sugar cane, rice and rubber as the main products. Many of those are owned by government or private parties. Some of Kalibaru Manis citizen work as farm workers with indeterminate income, and awe-awe or other low paid works become their side jobs.

Data were collected with unstructured observation and semi-structured interview techniques. The data collection processes took two months, from January until March 2019. Three mothers with their young children voluntarily participated as the main informants. All of them are farm workers with awe-awe as their side jobs. The informant 1 and 2 are aged 28 and 35 years old, have two children with the oldest are 7-8 years old and the youngest aged 3-5 years old. The oldest child are elementary school students, and the youngest doesn’t have formal education yet. The informant 1 and 2 are married and live with their family in their house on the village. Informant 1 had finished her elementary education, while informant 2 was dropout in the elementary years. Informant 3 never had any formal education, and live only with her 5 years old child. Her husband had left for long time ago and never have any contact with the family. The older child were aged 19 years old and working in Bali, far from the village.

The data then analysed with generic process of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2003). Triangulation of data sources were applied as strategy for checking the accuracy of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis illustrate the general daily activities of the mothers and children from awe-awe doer families. Each of the mothers has routine household chores e.g. cooking, feeding the children, cleaning the house, washing clothes and collecting firewood every morning before going to the roadside for awe-awe. They like to bring her children on the site when doing awe-awe, especially when there’s no one to look after them in the house. On school day, the older
children like to come to the mother’s site after school for playing or do *awe-awe* by their own wish. The mothers do *awe-awe* for family financial support, given indeterminate income of their main job of the family as farm workers.

**Conversation orientation**

In informant 1 household, problems are discussed only by parents. The mother believes that her children are too young so it is inappropriate yet for the children to know the parents’ problem. The mother communicate more with her oldest son, mainly about school or *ngaji* (reading Qur’an) activities. With her youngest girl, communication occurs whenever she ask her to do something, responding the child or when playing with the child. Both of the children can express their wish, as long in proper manner.

In informant 2 household, family problems also are discussed between parents, and when the mother needs to do so, she will ask her children to play somewhere else so they won’t hear the parents debating. The mother believes that parents debate is not good model for the children behaviour. Limited communication were observed between the mother and her youngest boy, and more with her oldest girl. She tends to communicate with flat emotional tone in her voice and her face, including when responding to her children’s request or questions, praise them for help her doing chores or give some advices. The children are free to choose their daily activities. They also have somewhat freedom to speak, although the mother’s responses tend to be unsatisfactory.

Informant 3 tends to communicate commands and prohibitions to her young child. The mother busy with her chores, only occasionally look at the boy’s activity without saying a word. Their interactions are centred on daily nursing activities e.g. mealtime and bath time. Whenever get a job in a farm, she drop off her child to the grandmother’s house. But whenever she can look after the child by herself, she will bring him with her. The child looks shy, likes to play alone and has few interaction with other children in the neighbourhood, and the mother is doing nothing to stimulate the child to play outside or talks with his friends.

**Conformity orientation**

In informant 1 household, mother tend to control their children’s activities. School and basic religious activities are the main concern of the mother, especially for the older child that are in his first grade of elementary school. She likes to remind him to do his routine activities such as studying and *ngaji* (reading Qur’an) and accompanying him when doing so. But for the youngest one, she shows more serving attitudes. She feeds her whenever she asks for meal, holding the child, playing *cilukba* (peek-a-boo), etc. Nevertheless, she demands obedience and affirms it through telling the child what she wants them to do, advices to obey parents and confirm the consequences the child experienced for disobeying her. She’d ever spank when the child *nakal* (naughty for disobeying her), thought it necessary to affirm her commands though feel guilty when the child crying. When the children do something good, she reinforce them with praise. About *awe-awe*, the mother brings the children to the roadside for looking after them. She doesn’t enforce the child to do *awe-awe*, and let the children play or sleep near her.

In informant 2 household, the parents want the children to obey them and their teacher. The mother assert it by giving advices and talks what she expect the children to do. Nevertheless, the children have somewhat freedom to choose their daily activities e.g. studying, playing or join her to the roadside while she’s doing *awe-awe*. Little affirmation had made to the child’s behaviour, nor punishment for disobeying her. The mother just remind the oldest girl
not to spend too much time to play in her friend’s house, without giving any punishment if she disobey it. She tends to quip the child when they disobey, or use the husband’s or teacher’s power to control the excessive behaviour.

For informant 3, the mother are central and controlling her child’s activities. She demands total obedience, and disobedience will bring punishment. The mother likes to pinch the child to urge him to do her command. She also restrict her child’s interaction with other children in the neighbourhood, to avoid the boy from envy other’s possession and ask her to buy it for him. About awe-awe, the mother doesn’t enforce the child to do so. The boy is allowed to play near the mother, but whenever he gets some money, he has to hand it to his mother.

From these data, this study confirmed Amanda & Salim (2019) that the low income family tend to stress their family communication more on conformity orientation. All the families in this study are hierarchical which parents act as the main decision maker. The mothers from awe-awe doer family demand obedience from their children, though there are different emphasis on behaviour that the mothers want the children to do. The more educated mothers seem emphasizing good manners, while less educated one tends to be more practical with emphasizing behaviour that necessary to ease her managing daily routines.

For conversation orientation, all the mothers do not discuss family matters with their young. They believe that the children are too young to understand and doesn’t have any resources to participate in problem solving, so they never ask their opinion. Their communication with the children tend to focused on the children’s daily activities, such as school, religious activities, play, meal and bath time. In line with conformity orientation, communication are done to monitor their children’s activities or giving advices rather than discuss some matters with them.

Based on their communication orientation, these mothers tend to have protective communication pattern with their young children. The mother is the authority figure in mother-child relationship, who make decisions for the children and demand obedience. The children are perceived incompetent to comprehend the problems and make decision, so mother never ask their opinion about family matters.

In these families, mother tend to be dominant in communication process. The mother tells what the children have to do, ask about school, remind them about their tasks which then responded by the children. The children’s request tend to be responded by mother briefly or unsatisfactorily. There’re minimum dialogue happens to share ideas, negotiating or solving problems together. Strong orientation to conformity with little conversation in mother-child communication may become a relational maintenance strategies (Anderson, Dirks, Graesser, & Block, 2017) and ease the parental daily affairs on low income families, but less conducive for optimal children development. Many studies found that conversation orientation in family communication is important for young children’s and adolescents’ mental health (Zarnaghash, Zarnaghash, & Zarnaghash, 2013), assertiveness (Nakhaee, Vagharseyyedin, Afkar, & Mood, 2017), and empathy (Amanda & Salim, 2019).

Nevertheless, there’re are varied findings on the level of the mothers’ openness to the child expression, that seem related with their perception on the importance of discipline and their ability to make the children to do so. Mothers that demand discipline, in order to train good manners or to restrict their children’s demands, tend to control their children expressions and punish improper behaviours. Mother that doesn’t perceive herself capable to discipline their children tend to be more tolerant to their children expressions and excuses, prefer to quip or giving advices rather than punish the children’s improper behaviour.
More communication as controlling behaviour are seen on area of matters that are important for the mother. As described above, mother’s level of education and family stress may influence her main concern about the children. More educated mother with intact family relationship have better ambition of educational success for her children. She reminds her children about school duties, accompany them when doing homework and teach whatever she can. Li & Qiu (2018) stated that parenting and educational support, such as shown by these mothers, are important for cultivating children’s learning habits and could affect their academic performance. Parents’ participation in their children education are related with children’s more active learning behaviour and better academic performance.

Less educated mother with more family burden, because of her single-mother status, shows concern mainly about family survival. This finding confirm Heinrich (2014) that single-mother families tend to have more stress that distract her from children’s wellbeing. Economic hardship faced by low income single-mother tend to make her do a lot of restrictions on her children, including their education opportunities. The mother with additional family burden also tend to use corporal punishment for disobedience too often, which Samokhvalova (2016) discovered as one of maternal parenting mistakes that lead to communication difficulties in their children. These situations can be problematic for the children development because of distress, more behavioural problems and less education they experienced. The problems possibly higher on children who suffering social restriction that could bring major impact on the child’s social, emotional and cognitive development (Micsa & Smith, 2014).

For awe-awe doer families in Kalibaru Manis village, awe-awe are their side jobs, especially when there’s no job available in the farmlands. They do awe-awe for additional financial support, so they do not enforce the children to do awe-awe for them. They bring the children to the roadside only to look after them, so the children don’t stay alone in the house. The children can play or sleep when their mother doing awe-awe. They may also choose to stay at home with their father, or for older children, play at a friend’s house. So for these children, awe-awe activities are somewhat unique opportunity to make their own decision about what they want to do. This finding affirms Latifah, Sukidin & Ani (2014) that the children in Kalibaru Manis village tend to be awe-awe doer like their mother by their own choice. Such opportunity to make choice could give those children some sense of control that is important for their well-being and strengthen their sense of responsibility (Kohn, 1993). Special concern needs to be given to awe-awe doer families that experienced additional economic burden, such as single-mother families. In these families, awe-awe are somewhat important additional financial support, so the mother tends to control even enforce their children to do awe-awe.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description of communication orientation, the mother of awe-awe doer families tend to have protective communication pattern with their young children. The mother is the authority figure in mother-child relationship, who make decisions for the children and demand obedience. The children seen as incompetent yet so their mother never involve them in family matters discussions.

There are varied level of controlling behaviour and disciplinary techniques used by the mothers, that seem related with the importance of discipline and level of the mother’s confidence to assert discipline. The mother’s controlling behaviour appears more in the areas that is important for them to discipline the children, e.g. school, religious activities, manners, daily
care, buying decision, etc. For areas that’s not so important for the mothers, children are given opportunity to decide for themselves.

When awe-awe is not the main income of the family, the mother does not put much control about it. The mother does not enforce the children to do awe-awe nor control the money they get. Awe-awe then become unique opportunities for the children to decide for themselves.

REFERENCES


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