

Communication Within Families: Understanding Patterns and Impacts on Mental Health

Zohreh. Zadhasan¹ 

¹ Department of Psychology and Counseling, KMAN Research Institute, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

* Corresponding author email address: zohrehzadhasan@kmanresce.ca

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This review aims to explore the dynamics of communication within families and its impacts on mental health, highlighting the role of various communication patterns in shaping mental well-being.

Methods and Materials: Employing a descriptive narrative review approach, this article synthesizes contemporary literature from databases such as PubMed, PsycINFO, and Web of Science, focusing on studies published between 2000 and 2023. The selection criteria targeted empirical studies examining the relationship between family communication patterns and mental health outcomes across diverse cultural contexts.

Findings: The review identifies key communication patterns within families, including open, supportive, and conflictual communications, and their significant impacts on mental health. It reveals that positive communication patterns are associated with better mental health outcomes, while negative patterns correlate with adverse mental health effects. The findings also underscore the importance of cultural and contextual factors in understanding these relationships.

Conclusion: Strengthening family communication patterns offers a critical pathway to enhancing mental health. Future research should focus on developing targeted interventions that foster positive family communication and address the nuanced needs of diverse populations.

Keywords: Family communication, Mental health, Communication patterns, Narrative review, Cultural context.

1 Introduction

The communication patterns within families play a crucial role in shaping the mental health of individuals. Understanding these patterns and their impacts on mental health is essential for developing effective

interventions and support systems. Research has highlighted various factors that influence access to mental health care within communities, such as beliefs about the causes and treatment of mental illness, distrust of psychiatric services, lack of familiarity with the health system, and communication difficulties (Wynaden et al., 2005).

Additionally, poor perceptions of mental illness are prevalent among specific demographic groups, including the elderly, less educated individuals, and those with no family history of mental illness (Benti et al., 2016). Furthermore, mental health issues are often conceptualized as an absence of stress, with common stressors including conflict within family dynamics, domestic violence, and poverty (Kermode et al., 2007).

In addressing these challenges, it is crucial to increase knowledge within families and communities about identifying mental disorders and implementing effective management strategies (Damaiyanti et al., 2021). Innovative approaches, such as faith-based mental health support groups, have been developed to promote resilience and recovery, emphasizing psychoeducation, peer support, and faith encouragement (Phoenix, 2014). Moreover, mental health professionals have emphasized the importance of reducing stigma, facilitating coordination of care and resources, and developing initiatives tailored to the specific needs of populations (Martínez et al., 2023). Training programs for community mental health staff have also been identified as significant in improving attitudes toward mental illness (Li et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the influence of a sense of community on the relationship between community participation and mental health for individuals with serious mental illnesses has been highlighted, advocating for a holistic view of mental health (Terry et al., 2018). Despite the adverse economic consequences of mental disorders on households, service coverage and financial protection for affected families remain limited in many low- and middle-income countries (Ssebunnya et al., 2018). Engaging community health workers and sensitizing communities about mental health have been identified as beneficial strategies for strengthening mental health systems (Munakampe, 2020).

Incorporating ethno-specific approaches and traditional community-based systems has been recognized as a potential avenue for addressing cultural diversity and mental health (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2015). Additionally, integrating mental health into maternal health care has been identified as crucial, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where perinatal mental disorders are prevalent (Lasater et al., 2020). Community-based programs have been acknowledged for their potential to facilitate the integration of individuals with mental illness into mental health communities based on their subculture (Seo & Lee, 2021).

Therefore, this review aims to explore the dynamics of communication within families and its impacts on mental health, highlighting the role of various communication patterns in shaping mental well-being.

2 Methods and Materials

This narrative review follows a structured approach to explore the existing literature on communication patterns within families and their impacts on mental health. Given the complexity and breadth of this topic, we aimed to comprehensively understand how various forms of family communication influence mental well-being. This section outlines our search strategy, selection criteria, and the process of synthesizing the findings to construct a narrative review.

2.1 Search Strategy

To capture a wide range of studies relevant to our objectives, we conducted a systematic search across several electronic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords and phrases related to our main themes: "family communication," "communication patterns," "mental health," "interpersonal relationships," and "family dynamics." The search was limited to articles published in English from 2000 to 2023, to ensure the review focused on contemporary understandings and approaches within the field.

2.2 Selection Criteria

The selection of studies for this review was guided by specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. We included peer-reviewed journal articles that:

- Specifically focused on communication patterns within nuclear, extended, or chosen families.
- Examined the impact of these communication patterns on the mental health of family members, including studies with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- Were conducted in diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts to ensure a broad understanding of the subject matter.

We excluded articles that:

- Focused solely on communication in non-family contexts (e.g., workplace, friendships).

- Did not directly assess the impact of communication on mental health.
- Were case studies, commentaries, or editorials, to maintain a focus on empirical research findings.

2.3 Synthesis Process

Given the descriptive nature of this narrative review, our synthesis process aimed to descriptively summarize the findings from the selected studies rather than conduct a meta-analysis or thematic analysis. Each article was reviewed for its relevance to the objectives of our review, with particular attention to the types of communication patterns identified and their reported impacts on mental health. The synthesis involved a comparative review of the findings to identify common themes, differences, and gaps in the literature.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Overview of Communication Patterns in Families

The study of communication patterns within families is essential for understanding the dynamics that shape family interactions and relationships. These patterns have been found to significantly impact various aspects of family life, including mental health, resilience, and overall well-being. The theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence from research provide valuable insights into the diverse dimensions of family communication patterns.

The examination of family communication patterns has been linked to interpersonal communication competence, sex of the subject, and the nature of relationships within families (Koesten, 2004). Furthermore, research has explored the relationships between communication patterns and personality traits, such as self-esteem, self-monitoring, and desirability of control, shedding light on the intricate interplay between communication dynamics and individual characteristics (Huang, 1999).

Moreover, the impact of genetic testing for diseases on family systems has been studied, highlighting the significance of measures such as family structure, communication patterns, and cohesion in understanding the broader implications of health-related communication within families (Sobel & Cowan, 2000). Additionally, the role of family communication in fostering resilience in families with deaf children has been investigated, emphasizing the potential of communication patterns as a

theoretical framework for understanding family resilience in diverse contexts (Ramadhana et al., 2021).

The influence of family communication patterns has also been explored in the context of disability, relationship quality between emerging adults and their parents, and emotional intelligence (Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Shojaee et al., 2018; Szkody & McKinney, 2021). These studies have contributed to the understanding of how communication patterns shape family dynamics across different life stages and developmental milestones.

Furthermore, the impact of family communication patterns on various health-related outcomes has been a subject of investigation. Studies have examined the role of communication patterns in post-stroke vascular aphasia, internet addiction, and mental health recovery, highlighting the far-reaching implications of communication dynamics within families on health and well-being (Hidayat et al., 2021; Ramazanu et al., 2022; Tajalli & Zarnaghash, 2017).

Theoretical frameworks such as the dimensions of conversation orientation and conformity orientation have been utilized to conceptualize family communication patterns, providing a structured approach to understanding the diverse ways in which families communicate and interact (Arindra et al., 2023). Additionally, the influence of family communication patterns on cultural and ethnic contexts, educational awareness, and stress management has been explored, underscoring the multifaceted nature of communication dynamics within families (Khurana & Aggarwal, 2023; Muhyatun, 2022; Putri et al., 2021).

Moreover, the mediating role of family communication patterns in empathy development, caregiving experiences, and family purchase decisions has been investigated, highlighting the intricate links between communication patterns and various familial and individual outcomes (Abdullah & Salim, 2020; Khurana & Aggarwal, 2023; Wittenberg-Lyles et al., 2012).

The impact of family communication patterns on sensitive topics such as cancer diagnosis, aggression prediction in teenagers, and family functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic has also been examined, emphasizing the relevance of communication dynamics in navigating challenging life circumstances (Maroofi et al., 2021; Petersen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the study of family communication patterns has extended to diverse cultural, demographic, and clinical contexts, providing valuable insights into the universal and context-specific nature of communication dynamics within

families (Petersen et al., 2018; Ramadhana et al., 2019; Uddin, 2012).

In conclusion, the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence from research studies provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of family communication patterns and their profound impact on various aspects of family life. These insights contribute to the development of interventions, support systems, and theoretical frameworks aimed at promoting healthy communication dynamics and fostering resilience within families.

3.2 Theoretical Trends

The Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) is a prominent theoretical framework that emphasizes the impact of communication patterns on family dynamics. FCPT posits two dimensions of family communication: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. Conversation orientation refers to the extent to which family members engage in open communication, while conformity orientation relates to the degree of emphasis on homogeneity of beliefs and attitudes within family interactions. This theory has been instrumental in understanding how these communication patterns influence various aspects of family life, including decision-making, relationship dynamics, and individual well-being (Dorrance Hall & Scharp, 2019).

Additionally, the theory of family communication developed by is based on the schematic representation of relational knowledge, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricacies of family communication dynamics. This theory emphasizes the role of relational knowledge in shaping communication patterns within families, highlighting the influence of shared understanding and cognitive representations on family interactions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002).

Furthermore, the integration of attachment theory and family systems theory has provided valuable insights into the interplay between attachment orientations and family communication patterns. Research in this area has explored the rare but significant link between attachment theory and family systems theory, shedding light on how attachment orientations influence communication dynamics within families and their impact on individual well-being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Moreover, Systems Theory has been instrumental in defining the family as the unit of analysis, linking interactions of individuals, families, and the social

environment. This theoretical framework has provided a holistic perspective on family communication patterns, emphasizing the interconnectedness of family dynamics with broader social and environmental factors (Sobel & Cowan, 2000).

The application of Family Communication Patterns Theory has been instrumental in understanding the impact of communication patterns on various outcomes, including communication competence, social support, and relational maintenance behavior. This theory proposes two dimensions of family communication—conversation orientation and conformity orientation—that can impact decision-making and relational dynamics within families (Hurst et al., 2022).

Additionally, the Communication Privacy Management Theory has been applied to analyze the existing literature on families, particularly in the context of families created through assisted reproductive technology. This theoretical framework has provided valuable insights into the management of private information within families and its implications for family dynamics and well-being (Rauscher & Fine, 2012).

3.3 Impacts on Mental Health

The impact of communication patterns within families on the mental health of family members is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative outcomes. Positive caregiver mental health has been associated with stimulating family resilience behaviors, such as strong communication and problem-solving, which can contribute to improved mental health outcomes within the family (Hayes et al., 2022). Additionally, family competence and strong social-communication skills have been linked to lower depression symptoms in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder, highlighting the potential positive influence of family dynamics on mental health (Greenlee et al., 2020). However, the presence of mental health stigma has been found to lead to low self-esteem, shame, and anger among both mental health service users and their family caregivers, resulting in attempts to conceal the stigma, which can have detrimental effects on mental health (Monnapula-Mazabane & Petersen, 2022).

Furthermore, the impact of mental disorders on the quality of life of individuals and their families underscores the pervasive nature of mental health challenges within family dynamics (Kantorski et al., 2017). Protective factors such as strong familial relationships have been identified as important in promoting mental well-being, emphasizing the

potential role of family support in mitigating mental and emotional distress (McCleary et al., 2019). However, clinic-referred mothers have reported higher levels of phobia and depression, indicating the potential negative impact of mental health challenges on family functioning and individual well-being (Keren et al., 2010).

Moreover, the evolving emphasis on positive mental health has led to a more nuanced understanding of its role in promoting mental well-being and preventing mental disorders, highlighting the potential for positive communication patterns within families to contribute to overall mental health (MaggiStefania et al., 2013). Additionally, barriers to accessing perinatal mental health services have been found to interact with family and individual level factors, influencing maternal mental health outcomes (Maglica et al., 2021). The compounding challenges faced by disadvantaged communities in accessing mental health resources point to the need for enhanced support and opportunities for promoting well-being within families affected by mental health needs (Sanchez et al., 2020).

In sum, the literature highlights the complex interplay between communication patterns within families and the mental health of family members, encompassing both positive and negative impacts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing interventions and support systems aimed at promoting positive communication patterns and fostering resilience within families.

3.4 Moderating Factors

Factors that may influence the relationship between family communication and mental health are multifaceted and encompass a wide range of individual, familial, and contextual elements. The potential impact of these factors on the relationship between family communication and mental health is evident in the literature. The relationship between family communication and mental health is influenced by a myriad of factors, including medication adherence, cultural and community contexts, coping patterns, community support, and interorganizational relationships. These factors collectively shape the mental health outcomes of individuals within families, underscoring the complex interplay between individual, familial, and contextual elements in the realm of mental health:

The adherence to medication and treatment regimens for mental health conditions can significantly influence the mental health outcomes of individuals within families.

Research has shown that untreated individuals with schizophrenia experienced worse outcomes compared to those who received treatment, indicating the critical role of medication adherence in mental health (Ran et al., 2015).

Ethnicity and cultural factors can influence help-seeking behaviors and access to mental health services within families. Major impediments to treatment, such as isolation and lack of coordination of community agencies, have been identified as influential factors in help-seeking patterns, underscoring the impact of cultural and community contexts on mental health support (Putri et al., 2021).

Individual coping patterns, pre-morbid personality traits, and resilience factors have been recognized as influential elements in the psychosocial aspects of mental health, highlighting the individual-level factors that can shape mental health outcomes within families (Math et al., 2006).

The availability and quality of community support systems play a crucial role in shaping the mental health of individuals within families. The concept of a community support system has been identified as essential for persons with long-term mental illness, emphasizing the significance of community-level factors in mental health support (Hayes et al., 2022; Sanchez et al., 2020).

The associations between stressors and mental health outcomes have been found to be influenced by family support, including family communication and coping strategies. Strong familial relationships and support have been identified as protective factors promoting mental well-being within families (Paek & Lim, 2016).

Factors associated with service reforms have been shown to increase stress and burden experienced by households, impacting the primary environment in which care is received. The impact of service reforms on caregiving environments and the stress experienced by families underscores the broader systemic influences on mental health within families (Breen et al., 2007).

The work environment of family members, including factors such as satisfaction and stress, can influence mental health outcomes within families. A comparative analysis of work environments for caregivers has highlighted the influence of work environment satisfaction on mental health (Kim et al., 2022).

Intergenerational communication patterns and stress within refugee families have been identified as factors that elevate the risk for mental and emotional distress. Protective factors such as strong familial relationships have been emphasized as important for promoting mental well-being within families (McCleary et al., 2019).

The quality of working relationships between family support organizations and mental health agencies can influence mental health outcomes within families. Interactional factors, inner contextual aspects, and outer contextual factors have been identified as influential elements in the quality of the working relationship between organizations (Acri et al., 2014).

Community support has been found to significantly influence family resilience and mental health among caregivers of youth with autism spectrum disorder. Caregiver mental health has been identified as a significant mediator of the relationship between community support and family resilience, highlighting the impact of community-level support on family mental health (Hayes et al., 2022).

Cultural and contextual factors, such as client identity, community norms, and values, have been recognized as influential in conceptualization and treatment plans for mental health. Incorporating cultural and contextual factors into treatment plans has been identified as important for addressing mental health needs within communities (Finello & Poulsen, 2011).

Barriers to accessing mental health services, including family and individual level barriers, can interact with risk factors of poor maternal mental health. The influence of barriers to accessing mental health services on maternal mental health underscores the importance of addressing systemic and individual-level barriers within families (Kantorski et al., 2017).

Overall, family communication patterns have been shown to have a meaningful relationship with various cognitive activities, relational behaviors, and individual well-being. The impact of family communication patterns on cognitive and relational aspects highlights the influence of communication dynamics on mental health within families (Greenlee et al., 2020).

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This review has underscored the intricate link between family communication patterns and mental health outcomes. The evidence presented reveals both the potential protective and detrimental impacts of these patterns on individual well-being. For instance, positive communication within families has been associated with better mental health outcomes (Hayes et al., 2022), highlighting the role of supportive and open communication in fostering resilience and emotional well-being. Conversely, negative communication patterns, such as conflictual interactions, have been linked to adverse

mental health effects, including increased levels of depression and anxiety (Monnapula-Mazabane & Petersen, 2022). These findings suggest a critical need for interventions that focus on improving communication skills within families to support mental health.

Furthermore, the review highlights the importance of considering cultural, socioeconomic, and contextual factors in understanding and addressing the impacts of family communication on mental health. The role of cultural sensitivity and the need for culturally tailored interventions are particularly emphasized, reflecting the diverse ways in which families communicate and the varying implications for mental health across different communities (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2015).

In conclusion, this review articulates the profound influence of family communication patterns on mental health. It reveals a complex interplay of factors that contribute to the mental well-being of family members, emphasizing the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive approaches to promote positive communication and address mental health challenges within families. Future research should continue to explore innovative interventions and support mechanisms that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse family structures and cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, fostering healthy communication within families may serve as a cornerstone for enhancing mental health outcomes and nurturing resilient family dynamics.

This review emphasizes the necessity for mental health practitioners to integrate family communication improvement strategies into their interventions. Professionals should be equipped to assess family communication patterns and offer tailored strategies that encourage positive interactions and conflict resolution. Training programs for parents and caregivers on effective communication could significantly impact mental health outcomes. Additionally, incorporating family therapy into mental health services may provide a holistic approach to addressing individual and familial psychological well-being.

Future studies should aim to develop and test interventions that enhance communication within families, with a focus on longitudinal outcomes to assess long-term effects on mental health. Research should also explore the impact of digital communication technologies on family interactions and mental health. Additionally, further investigation is needed into the ways cultural, socioeconomic, and environmental factors influence family communication patterns and their mental health

implications, aiming to develop culturally sensitive and inclusive intervention strategies.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

We ensured that all data derived from secondary sources were accurately represented and cited, respecting intellectual property rights. The synthesis of findings from various studies was approached with integrity, avoiding bias or misinterpretation. Additionally, this review highlights the ethical importance of culturally sensitive research practices, advocating for future investigations to consider the diversity and inclusivity of participants, thereby promoting ethical research that respects the values and norms of different communities.

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