



Women's Communication Model in Dealing with Domestic Violence in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the communication model of women facing domestic violence (DV) in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat environment, a coastal area characterized by a tough society, lower-middle economic conditions, and relatively low education levels. The background highlights that female DV victims often choose silence and do not report cases due to social fear, economic dependence, and misguided religious understandings, exacerbated by unhealthy gender relations and male domination. The study's primary objectives are to analyze women's communication with their surroundings, their strategies in facing DV, and the communication model employed. Utilizing a critical paradigm and a qualitative approach with a case study method, this research aims to uncover unjust social structures and empower women. Theories applied include interpersonal communication theory, Muted Group Theory (which explains how minority groups like women can be silenced), Self-disclosure, and Gender theory. Five main informants were involved, with source triangulation from a psychologist and the Head of the Women Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (PPA) in Binjai City. The findings indicate that female DV victims tend to maintain their marriages and do not report violence due to the normalization of abuse, social stigma (shame if others hear), and repeated persuasion from their partners.

INTRODUCTION

Harmonious communication is rare due to the influence of work faced from open access and high-risk resources and uncontrollable income (Fajrie, 2018). These factors can cause coastal communities to have a tough, assertive, less manageable and open character (Nainggolan et al., 2023). Open in the sense of speaking frankly (as is) in expressing their feelings (Pranata, 2021). Verbal violence and other forms of violence can be eliminated by using healthy communication. Healthy communication can predict domestic violence, which is concluded in the research of Emmanuel, Esohe, and Abiola (2023) they suggest that in order to establish healthy communication, married couples must make time to communicate through physical or electronic contact such as telephone calls or video calls.

Mahastuti (2023) who explains that coastal communities use monopoly communication where one person has full control in their family. The burden on coastal women is getting heavier because they have no place to tell their stories. Domestic violence is a form of injustice that is often experienced by women due to unhealthy gender relations. The relationship between women and men in the family is conditioned by ownership which results in men tending to have control and authority over women (Yustika et al., 2022). The position of women and men in the household is conditioned by ownership which results in men tending to have control and authority over women and are usually positioned as "kings".

In the household, the man has full power to control his family. While women are "servants" who are ready to serve and fulfill the needs of their king. When something unwanted or unsatisfactory happens, it often triggers domestic violence (Rohimah, 2020). The position of men is higher than women and usually describes a subordinate position. This subordinate means that the position is in a lower position in front of others and is subject to control or authority. This power comes from the sense of self-confidence or superiority and superiority felt by men over women. Therefore, men feel that they are the most important humans. In addition, subordination is an attitude or action of society that places women in a lower position than men (Uswatun Hasanah, 2023).

The relationship between men and women is shaped by traditional power which is often a source of domestic violence. This means that men apply what they are taught when men are compared to women and this power is used to control and dominate others (Iswahyudi et al., 2020). Every family member must adhere to and have principles of humanity, equality and justice so that domestic violence does not occur. Humanity, that everyone must be respected as a whole human being who has the same dignity and honor without exception. Domestic violence crimes in Indonesia are currently still dominated by wives as victims and the perpetrators are their own husbands (Mumpuni & Puspitaningrum, 2022). So that it can give rise to injustice which is usually accompanied by violence against women.

Violence against partners is influenced by several factors such as low education, behavior that condones acts of violence, dissatisfaction in marriage, difficulty in communicating as a couple, and the position of women in the household is still low compared to men (Basril et al., 2023). Domestic violence is

common in every city. This violence will continue if individuals still take the wrong action. Domestic violence is a violation of human rights and a crime against human dignity and is a form of discrimination (Syahfitri & Rangkuti, 2024). Cases of violence against women show how important it is for the government to address this problem. Male domination (male domination culture) in social life causes violence against women. Men often use violence to win opinions, express their dissatisfaction with the wrong person, prevent further action. Violence against women is the result of male domination (Rahmawati et al., 2021).

Women who are victims of domestic violence often give up when they experience domestic violence. Because for them, reporting the act and ending the marriage is a journey full of difficulties. Every woman has her own way and story because every woman has challenges and difficulties (Iswahyudi et al., 2020). Being a woman in the country has its own challenges. The reason is, women in Indonesia still often get unfair treatment. This is due to the perception that women's strength and power are below men in various aspects, such as politics, education, work environment, and others. This response is rooted in the community environment where there is a belief that male dominance applies in many fields. As a result, there is injustice in access and opportunities for women to develop in these fields (Zuhri & Amalia, 2022).

This study has opportunities in women's communication research and studies on domestic violence by analyzing communication models and the relationship between interpersonal communication as a supporter of this study. From the results of the first observation, the researcher found problems in wives or coastal women who experienced violence in their households. The violence was common and experienced during their marriage, and they even refrained from reporting the case and maintained their marriage. So, the researcher wanted to analyze the communication model of coastal women who experienced domestic violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, feelings, and meanings between two or more people. This process involves sending and receiving messages, both verbally and non-verbally. In this context, communication occurs directly, involving face-to-face interaction and creating a more personal relationship. Interpersonal communication as a process of exchanging information, ideas, or feelings between two or more people directly. This process involves the use of verbal and nonverbal as well as the social context that influences how messages are delivered and received. Interpersonal communication is the process of communication from one individual to another, in life (Subtinanda & Yuliana, 2023).

Interpersonal communication usually focuses on the form and nature of relationships, conversations, interactions, and characteristics of the communicator. The more people involved in communication, the more complex the communication and it is considered that this type of communication is most effective in changing human attitudes, opinions, or behavior in the process of

dialogue. The nature of dialogue is shown by oral communication and direct conversation. The communicator knows immediately whether his message is accepted or rejected, has a positive or negative impact. If not accepted, the communicator will provide the widest possible opportunity (Latifah, 2021). Interpersonal communication is the delivery of specific ideas, information, and views between two or more individuals, with the aim of achieving a shared understanding that can encourage desired behavioral changes (Ginting et al., 2023).

Self-disclosure is part of the interpersonal communication process which is a way for others to know what is happening to us, appropriate self-disclosure can reduce anxiety, increase comfort, and intensify interpersonal attraction (Alvarisi, 2022). The concept of family is formed in relationships such as marriage, blood, adoption. Furthermore, the communication process connects individuals as family members and shows the rules of communication within the family. This general concept of family communication explains how the process of delivering messages is sent with a specific intention, intentionally, the shared meaning is bound biologically, legally, or through marriage. Messages in the family are in the form of a commitment to maintain relationships and control family members (Bahfiarti, 2016). Communication in the family has a very important role (Ismiati Nurseha et al., 2022). The importance of this communication can form harmonious communication where there is a very important part in determining whether a family survives or not.

Violence against women is thought to occur due to poor family communication models. The family communication model is used to identify elements of communication and their relationships, so that they can be formulated and proposed (Purba et al., 2020). According to Kramarae, male dominance in communication is one way that women do not have a voice in society or in the family (Griffin et al., 2022). Ardener, initially thought that ignoring women's experiences was a unique problem in social anthropology. However, Ardener realized that disclosure occurs because of the lack of power experienced by any group in a subordinate position (Ambarita et al., 2021).

Being a woman is not just a biological destiny, but the result of a long social, cultural, and historical construction. It is society that creates the idea of what it means to be a "woman" and sets certain roles and expectations for them (Heraty, 2018). Simone de Beauvoir's view, women who are considered weak, objectified, and considered helpless cannot be dismissed or ignored. Historical facts of philosophy, as explained in her book "Second Sex" (Facts and Myths), can follow the classical understanding or myth that assumes that men think rationally and women prioritize feelings. This myth is a strong curse that makes women less likely to have a place in philosophy (Rohmah et al., 2021).

Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory has two main concepts: the concept of women's existence through nature, history, and myth, and women's resistance strategies to fight for their existence. Patriarchal culture is considered the main cause of gender bias problems and negative stigmas that discredit women, because society misunderstands gender roles, so that women are considered objects rather than subjects (Riskita & Rengganis, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Researchers use qualitative research methods with case study methods, specifically to describe the phenomena that occur at the research location. A qualitative approach is a research process that produces descriptive data in oral or written form from people and behaviors observed by researchers (Mappe & Jusnawati, 2022). This research is located in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment, Alur Dua Baru Village, Sei Lapan District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. This location is included in the coastal transition area of land and sea which is more precisely in the mangrove coastal environment. The subjects of the study were female informants who experienced domestic violence in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment. This study uses source triangulation involving Psychologists, and the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service. This triangulation aims to obtain a more detailed and in-depth picture of the validity of the data provided by the information so that the results of this study provide scientifically valid information.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women's Communication with the Environment When Facing Domestic Violence

Informants showed diversity in who they shared their experiences of domestic violence with. Some women tended to be very selective, limiting their communication to only those closest to them whom they fully trusted, such as their mother or siblings. This choice was often based on a desire to maintain privacy or because of a strong emotional bond with the individual, who they felt would provide non-judgmental support.

Informants tried to broaden their communication, involving close friends or even neighbors in informal conversations. However, communication with parties outside the immediate family was often done carefully, not directly addressing the issue of domestic violence explicitly, but rather talking more about household dynamics or life difficulties. This suggests a tendency to seek validation or emotional support indirectly, without openly revealing embarrassing or painful details.

Significant and recurring barriers emerged in the experiences of all five informants. A deep sense of shame was a major barrier, where victims felt embarrassed and reluctant to reveal experiences that were considered embarrassing for themselves and their families. The social stigma attached to domestic violence is also a heavy burden, encouraging women to hide their suffering for fear of negative judgment, being labeled as a failure in the household, or even being blamed for the violence that befell them.

Fear of negative reactions from the surrounding environment or family also often hinders honest communication. There is a fear that disclosing the problem will worsen the situation, trigger greater conflict, or even endanger the safety of themselves or their children. Several informants also worried that the environment would not provide meaningful solutions, or would even belittle their suffering, so they felt it was better to keep the problem to themselves.

The dominance of patriarchal norms in society also plays a major role in silencing women's voices. A culture that prioritizes women's patience,

maintaining the integrity of the household without questioning the role of men, or considering household problems as private matters, often prevents women from seeking outside help. Social pressure to maintain the image of a harmonious family is also a psychological burden that prevents them from speaking openly about domestic violence.

Inadequate access to information about their rights as victims of domestic violence or available support resources is also a significant obstacle. Many women do not know where to seek help, who they can trust, or what legal procedures to follow. Some informants also face situations where the family support system is actually part of the problem. In some cases, close family members, especially those in authority, tend to ignore or even validate the perpetrators of violence, thus further silencing the victim's voice. This shows that not all family environments can be a safe place to share, and sometimes it actually worsens the victim's isolation.

Women's communication with their surroundings in dealing with domestic violence is a challenging process. Various obstacles, both internal (shame, fear) and external (social stigma, patriarchal norms, lack of access), collectively contribute to the phenomenon of silencing women's voices. This shows that to encourage effective communication, broader structural and social changes are needed, in addition to individual support.

Based on the explanations given, overall, Self-Disclosure Theory and Gender Theory are the most relevant. Muted Group Theory actually also shows relevance, especially in some cases. Self-Disclosure Theory in general, women show various levels and strategies in opening up about domestic problems, including violence. Some choose not to disclose their problems at all to their immediate environment, due to concerns about information distortion, embarrassment, or a desire to protect privacy and family disgrace. Others selectively choose who they disclose to, practicing limited and strategic self-disclosure, to seek support without causing greater negative consequences. However, others make extensive self-disclosures to many parties in search of relief and solutions, even though the responses received are not always adequate or even face defensiveness from their partner. The decision to come out is often a complex process influenced by personal commitments, socio-cultural values, and considerations of the consequences for children.

Gender theory has a significant impact on the dynamics of communication and decision-making in the household. Some women take a more dominant role in initiating communication, managing finances, and taking care of children's education. This can be due to a lack of initiative or ability on the part of the husband, forcing women to adapt their roles and take on more responsibilities when men are unable to fulfill the traditional role of primary breadwinner. However, this dominance does not always mean that women have complete freedom of speech, as they can still be silenced by their husbands when they are emotional, indicating the existence of limiting gender power dynamics. In addition, differences in views on childcare and gender expectations in discipline can create disharmony in communication between husband and wife. Women

also often manage their emotions and choose the right time to communicate in order to maintain household harmony.

Women's Strategies in Dealing with Domestic Violence

The strategies used by informants in dealing with domestic violence vary widely, reflecting their adaptation to stressful conditions and efforts to survive. Some women tend to adopt a passive adaptation strategy, where they try to "accept" the situation or surrender to the situation that befalls them. This strategy is often driven by the belief that with patience, the situation will improve, or because they feel they have no other choice but to endure for the sake of the integrity of the family, especially the children. This form of resignation does not mean without resistance, but rather a form of silent resistance to maintain balance.

Another strategy observed is avoidance and limitation of communication with the perpetrator of violence. Some informants consciously minimize interactions that can trigger conflict or violence, and try to maintain emotional distance. Although this strategy does not directly resolve the root cause of domestic violence, it can provide space for victims to process emotions, reduce the intensity of conflict, and protect themselves from repeated exposure to violence. This is a form of self-defense that allows them to manage stress levels.

Seeking social support from the closest environment is also an important strategy used by some women. Sharing experiences with close friends, siblings, or parents helps them feel less alone and gain validation for the suffering they experience. Emotional and moral support from this inner circle is crucial to rebuilding self-confidence and providing the psychological strength needed to cope with difficult situations of domestic violence. In some cases, this support can also lead to practical advice or concrete assistance.

Women's strategies also involve strategic adaptation to patriarchal-dominated norms. This means that women must filter their experiences and adapt their communication to fit the language or expectations prevailing in the environment. This adaptation often means silencing their voices.

Some informants also indicated a mixed strategy, in which they tried to communicate directly with their husbands, even though this often led to deadlock. These attempts at direct communication indicate a desire to repair the relationship or seek understanding, reflecting a hope of resolving the conflict internally. However, when direct communication fails, they then seek support from outside parties, indicating an awareness of the need for third-party intervention to help resolve the problem.

This strategy also includes efforts to protect children from the impact of domestic violence. Many women choose to stay in the marriage, or limit their communication, in order to maintain stability or the safety of their children. Concern for the future of their children is often the primary motivation behind the decisions and strategies they make, even if it means sacrificing their own well-being. This is a testament to the strength and resilience of mothers.

Strategies involve building personal resilience and coping skills. Although not always expressed verbally, many women develop internal strengths to deal

with difficult situations. This may involve developing coping mechanisms, finding meaning in suffering, or finding strength in personal beliefs. These adaptive skills help them to survive and continue to fight despite adverse conditions.

The strategies women employ is often limited by the resources they have available, whether financial, social, or informational. These limitations can force them to adopt strategies that are less effective or even detrimental in the long run, as their options are limited. Economic insecurity is often a major barrier to them escaping domestic violence.

The overall strategies women use to deal with violence reflect a complex struggle to survive, maintain dignity, and protect their loved ones in stressful situations. These strategies range from passive adaptation to active support seeking, but all demonstrate resilience and coping mechanisms. A deeper understanding of these strategies is essential to developing responsive and relevant interventions for women who are victims of domestic violence.

Based on the overall experience of the informants in dealing with domestic violence, their strategies are most relevantly explained through the Self-Disclosure Theory and the Muted Group Theory. The theory also has relevance in the case of the informant's partner who does not support them. The Self-Disclosure Theory, women show various strategies in disclosing or hiding their experiences of violence. Some choose to keep the problem a secret in order to maintain the privacy and shame of the family, even if it means suffering alone. On the other hand, some others strategically choose who they will share their stories with, often avoiding the nuclear family so as not to burden or cause conflict, and instead choosing the husband's relatives in the hope that they can provide a positive influence.

There are also those who make extensive self-disclosures to various parties as an effort to release emotions and find solutions, although the responses received are often not fully supportive or even tend to defend the perpetrator. In addition, some informants choose to surrender their problems entirely to spiritual powers, feeling that sharing with others will only make things worse. Muted Group Theory, it is clear how women's voices can be ignored or silenced when they try to deal with violence. Several informants reported that their husbands directly silenced their communication attempts when emotional situations were at their peak, making them reluctant to speak up again. In addition, husbands who were passive and indifferent to the issues raised, especially regarding finances or childcare, left women feeling unsupported and burdened, making their voices feel impactless.

Furthermore, when women sought help from their social environment, such as their husband's family, there was often a tendency to defend the men, further confirming that women's messages were not fully received or validated, reinforcing their position as a group whose voices were "muted" in the existing social structure. Gender Theory, although more focused on roles and expectations, remains relevant in explaining women's adaptive strategies. The condition of a husband who is passive or unable to fulfill his role, for example in earning a living, encourages women to take on a more dominant role in

household management as a survival strategy. In addition, women's efforts to maintain household harmony, such as choosing the right time to communicate or even apologizing even though they are not at fault, can also be seen as part of a strategy influenced by gender role expectations to maintain family stability amidst conflict, including violence.

Women's Communication Model in Dealing with Domestic Violence in the West Tangkahan Lagan Environment

The researcher found a new communication model in the communication process based on a summary of the previous discussion which explains women's communication with the environment, strategies in dealing with domestic violence and the communication models they use (interactional and S-R). So, the findings of the communication model are the "Empowered Voice" communication model. The word "Empowered" or "Empowered" was inspired by the answer of the triangulation informant (Head of UPTD Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service of Binjai City) that she said women must be "Empowered". Therefore, the researcher chose the word empowered in naming the new model. The empowered voice model is a dynamic representation of women's communication journey in dealing with domestic violence, which comes directly from the experiences of informants. The researcher also summarizes the process of women's communication models in dealing with domestic violence through the empowered voice model communication model. This process stage begins with identifying the limitations of existing communication models to developing a new framework that focuses on empowering women's voices:

1. Identification of Limitations of Existing Models:

Existing communication models (interactional and Stimulus-Response) have not been able to fully explain the complexity of women's experiences in dealing with domestic violence. These limitations are especially evident in the aspects of voice silencing (muted groups), massive communication barriers, and the crucial role of validating support.

2. Proposing a New Communication Model: Empowering Voices:

A new communication model called the Empowering Voices Communication Model is proposed. This model is designed to represent the communication process of women in dealing with domestic violence. Determination of Model Elements: This new model is defined by the following key elements:

- a) Internal Experience: The initial source of the entire process, including physical, emotional, and psychological trauma due to domestic violence (shame, fear, confusion, anger, despair).
- b) The Drive to Communicate: The internal desire to share experiences or seek help, can be very strong or subtle.
- c) Communication Barriers: Processing the urge to communicate, divided into internal barriers (shame, fear of stigma, patriarchal norms) and external barriers (social norms of silencing, dominance of perpetrators/patriarchs, risk of retaliation, lack of access to information).

- d) Communication Efforts: Real actions taken by women to communicate, ranging from closed or limited communication, indirect, being silenced, to the potential for conflict.
- e) Environmental Response: Feedback from the party being communicated with, can be in the form of a silencing, neutral, passive, or supportive response.
- f) Impact on Voice and Self: The direct result of the environmental response, can be in the form of silencing of the voice and disempowerment of the self (if the response is silencing) or empowerment of the voice and self-strengthening (if the response is supportive).
- g) Repeating Cycle: The impact on the voice and self will influence the next urge to communicate, which can either strengthen the cycle of silencing or break it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's Communication with the Surrounding Environment in Dealing with Domestic Violence in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment. Communication between women victims of domestic violence with the surrounding environment in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment shows diversity, but with significant obstacles. Some women are very selective, only sharing with close people they trust such as mothers or siblings, based on the desire to maintain privacy and emotional ties. Others try to expand communication to close friends or neighbors, but do so carefully and do not explicitly mention domestic violence, but rather discuss household dynamics in general. Women's Strategies in Dealing with Domestic Violence in the Tangkahan Lagan Barat Environment. The strategies used by informants vary and reflect adaptations for survival. Passive strategies such as accepting the situation or being submissive are often chosen for the sake of family integrity, especially children, although this is a form of silent resistance. Avoidance strategies and limiting communication with the perpetrator are also used to minimize conflict and maintain emotional distance, as a form of self-defense to manage stress. Seeking social support from the closest environment such as friends, siblings, or parents is an important strategy to feel less alone, gain validation, and rebuild self-confidence. This support sometimes leads to practical advice or concrete assistance. Women's Communication Model in Dealing with Domestic Violence. Analysis of informants as a whole show that the interactional communication model is the most frequently seen framework, where senders and recipients exchange messages and feedback. Passive, unsupportive feedback, or even strengthening the dominant position of the perpetrator or patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, the interactional model is manifested in women's efforts to seek support and validation from those closest to them, where positive feedback from the closest environment is crucial for overcoming emotional burdens and building self-confidence. Direct communication with partners also shows an interactional model, although it often ends in conflict due to strong communication barriers. In addition to the interactional model, the Stimulus-Response (S-R) model is also relevant, especially in understanding the

impact of silencing voices. Stimuli from a patriarchal-dominated environment and acts of violence produce responses in the form of silencing voices and beliefs to be patient or resigned. The absence of valid feedback and support strengthens this S-R pattern, where women's voices are often eliminated or cannot be expressed authentically.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future advanced research should expand on the "Empowered Voice" communication model by integrating intersectional feminist perspectives and examining how cultural, religious, and economic factors uniquely shape women's communication responses to domestic violence across various regions. While this study reveals that patriarchal norms and muted communication dynamics heavily restrict women's ability to disclose abuse, further investigation is needed to understand how localized support systems such as village leaders, religious figures, or digital advocacy platforms either reinforce or dismantle these silencing mechanisms. Moreover, longitudinal studies that track changes in communication behaviors after targeted interventions (e.g., counseling, legal literacy programs, or community-based empowerment workshops) would provide insight into how sustainable empowerment can be fostered. Incorporating participatory action research (PAR) may also ensure that survivors are not only subjects but co-creators of solutions, thereby transforming passive silence into active agency.

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