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Family Communication of Health Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Interaction Adaptation

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is still a global health problem, including in Indonesia. When people's social life mostly moves to the domestic sphere, be it professional work, education, tourism, and so on, they must adapt to the development of the pandemic situation. However, there is one sector of professional work that has not experienced significant changes during the pandemic, namely health workers. Health workers are a profession that requires them to be at work longer than being at home to gather with family. When cases of the spread of COVID-19 are increasing and spreading, health workers must adjust themselves when they have to go home before meeting their families. This study describes and analyzes how the adaptations that must be carried out by families of health workers during this pandemic. This study uses a qualitative research approach with a case study approach. The source of data used in this research is in-depth interviews. The findings of this study are that with the interaction adaptation by health workers they are able to adjust when they have to go home before meeting with family during the pandemic, and can make communication interactions run smoothly as they should.

1. Introduction

At the end of 2019, the world was hit by an outbreak of a disease called Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). This disease is caused by a virus that can be passed from person to person (CDC, 2020). COVID-19 infection is caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-Cov-2). This disease infection was first discovered in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China at the end of December 2019. Since then this disease has spread widely throughout the world and in March 2020

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WHO (World Health Organization) declared this disease a pandemic (Ayuningtyas et al., 2020). Until now, the COVID-19 pandemic is still a global health problem, and Indonesia is no exception.

Since the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the social life of the community has shifted to the domestic sphere, be it professional work, education, tourism, and so on, which must adapt to the development of the pandemic situation. However, there is one sector of professional work that has not experienced significant changes during the pandemic, namely health workers.

Health workers are people who have a very high risk of contracting it. This often makes health workers feel anxiety and uncertainty because they have to provide health services to the community directly. Health workers are a profession that requires them to be at work longer than being at home to gather with family. Every health worker who is married and has a family in addition to undergoing the profession as a health worker, also has main duties and functions within the family. They can act as children, fathers, fathers and siblings for families who are at home (Nursanti et al., 2021).

The family is the first social group organization recognized by the subject of organizational communication of the groups involved in it. Therefore, in the family it is necessary to cultivate effective communication between each other in order to foster a deep sense of attachment and mutual need (Sinaga et al., 2016). Family communication is a form of message exchange process that occurs between father, mother and children which not only results in the exchange of information but also produces understanding between the communicating parties. Quality family communication is very influential on individual behavior (Rizaldi & Sumartono, 2018). Each family has a different style in communicating and interacting with their families, considering that family conditions are not the same as families with working mothers will be different from families whose mothers do not work (Wood, 2016).

Various changes in lifestyle and patterns of interaction have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including those felt by health workers who work at the Sebelas Maret University Hospital (UNS Hospital). UNS Hospital is one of several hospitals that are health facilities that have an important role in handling the COVID-19 pandemic in the Solo Raya area. When cases of the spread of COVID-19 are increasing and spreading, health workers must adjust themselves when they have to go home before meeting their families. So there is a need for adaptation that must be carried out by families of health workers during this pandemic.

2. Materials and Methods

Interaction Adaptation Theory

This theory was developed by Judee Burgoon and his colleagues. Burgoon is interested in the perspective of people in adapting to one another (Littlejohn, 2017). According to this theory, when someone starts communicating with other people, that person will have a general idea of what will happen, which is called the interaction position, which is the place or starting point where someone will have communication. This is determined by a combination of factors which the theorists call RED, which stands for requirements, expectations, and desires (Morissan, 2013).

Requirements are everything a person needs in an interaction. Requirement can be biological, such as the need for food, or social needs, such as the need for affiliation or the need for friendship. Expectations are patterns that are expected to occur. If a person does not know the other person very well then that person will rely on the norms of politeness and/or the goals of certain situations such as friendship goals. If a person knows the other person well then it is likely that these expectations will be based on past experiences. While the desire is what you want to achieve or what is expected to happen.

Initial behavior in the interaction consists of a combination of verbal and nonverbal behavior that reflects the position of the interaction, environmental factors in which the interaction occurs, and the level of expertise possessed. But in most interactions, a person's behavior will change, as will the other person when they start to influence each other (mutual influence). This situation of mutual influence has a significant effect and, in many situations, it is so much greater that it can change the plans that have been prepared in advance.

Burgoon in his research found that communicators have a kind of interactional synchrony, which is a coordinated pattern of alternating each other. For example, when a conversation occurs, both parties will tend to behave the same way, namely an attempt to imitate each other or convergence in a reciprocal pattern. But at other times the opposite may occur (divergence) which is called the compensation pattern. Adaptation is the most important part for health workers and their families in adjusting to the midst of uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study uses a qualitative research approach. The type of approach used in this qualitative research is a case study approach. This research uses descriptive case study research. Descriptive research aims to provide a description in the form of a narrative about a social phenomenon under study. Researchers describe indicators of variables that are the center of research attention (Slamet, 2019).

Sources of data used in this study are primary data in the form of direct interviews (in-depth interviews), and secondary data in the form of documentation. The sampling technique will be carried out non-probability (nonprobability sampling) by selecting or determining who is the sample and informants as data sources that provide information with purposive sampling, which in Patton's language is referred to as purposive sampling (Slamet, 2019).

The criteria for the selected informants are people who are in direct contact with this research to obtain information/explanation/case descriptions, such as: health workers and having children aged 4-12 years. With these criteria, the researcher decided to use a sample of informants as follows by presenting the names of informants using initials to maintain the purity of information and informant data.

Table 1
Informant Data

Informant's Initials	Profession
Adp	Pharmacist
Nsk	Pharmacist
Ha	Nurse
Df	Medical Laboratory Technologist
Ek	Medical Laboratory Technologist
R	Nurse
Ew	Nurse
Rw	Nurse
A	Midwife
Vn	Midwife

The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative data analysis model belonging to Miles, Huberman and Saldana. The data analysis model consists of three processes, namely: data condensation, data display, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). The location or place of the research will be at the Sebelas Maret University Hospital in Kartasura, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java. UNS Hospital is the Technical Implementation Unit of Sebelas Maret University (UNS) which is a

supporting element of the Rector's duties in the field of health services. In addition, UNS Hospital is one of the referral hospitals for handling COVID-19 in Solo Raya.

3. Results and Discussions

The process of adapting the interaction of health workers becomes an important part when the COVID-19 situation is uncertain. This is inseparable from the concerns felt by health workers as parties who are at high risk of being exposed to COVID-19 before meeting with family at home.

As stated by Jude Burgoon as a development figure in the Interaction Adaptation Theory (IAT), when a person begins to communicate with other people, that person will have a general idea of what will happen, which is called the interaction position, which is the place or starting point. where one will have communication. It is determined by a combination of factors which the theorists call RED, which stands for requirements, expectations, and desires. (Morissan, 2013). Thus, the findings of the research on the interaction position of the informants are as follows:

3.1 Requirements

Requirements are everything that is needed by health workers before interacting with family at home. The main purpose of the various needs is of course to anticipate the occurrence of transmission and the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to the family.

In accordance with what was revealed by the informant Adp who said that when he returned home he was afraid of carrying a virus that he couldn't see. Moreover, she will return home to meet her husband and young child. So when she comes home before she interacts with her family she will take a shower.

> *"Jelas ya mba, pertama ketika pulang takut membawa virus. Kita kan ga ngerti ya virus itu kayak apa. Pulang ke rumah itu ada suami ada anak kan, tertuma anak sih karena masih kecil terus kalau sampai sakit gitu kan. Anak kecil bisa apa sih? Jadi yang paling ditakuti kalau pulang itu bawa penyakit yang bisa nular. Iya, mandi itu pasti saat pulang ke rumah. Maupun itu shift siang paling ga pulang jam setengah 10 malam saya tetap mandi. Jadi pulang, langsung masuk pertama kali ke kamar mandi baru ketemu keluarga. Palingan anak juga sudah bobo ya"* (Wawancara dengan informan Adp, tanggal 31 Mei 2022)

> "Obviously, miss, first when I came home I was afraid to bring the virus. We don't know what kind of virus it is. When I came home, my husband and my child. Especially my child because she was still small, so if she got sick, right? What can a little child do? So what is most feared is that when you go home, you bring a disease that can be contagious. Yes, take a shower when you get home. Even if it's the day shift at least I don't come home at half past 10 at night I still take a shower. So when you go home, you go straight to the bathroom for the first time and meet your family. At least the kids are already asleep" (Interview with Adp informant, 31 May 2022)

The informant also expressed his concern when he returned home. Her concern that his family will be exposed to COVID-19 is very high. So she needs to anticipate this by taking a shower at the hospital before going home, and when she gets home she will shower again.

> *"Ada banget. Cemasnya itu cemas banget. Sampai pulang kerja itu kadang disini kan sudah mandi, sampai rumah mandi lagi. Sampai seringnya itu..istilahnya apa ya..masuk angin itu sampai tiap hari. Berangkat mandi, sebelum pulang mandi, sampai di rumah mandi lagi. Pokoknya sampai aku tuh.. sampai anakku mau pergi kemana itu aku suruh pakai masker. Aku tuh paling cerewet soal itu kemarin. Karena takutnya itu takut banget. Kan aku tau kondisi pasien yang seperti itu, aku itu takut kalau sampai anakku kena. Aku,*

suami, dan anak itu jangan sampai kena. Tingkat stressnya tinggi. Aku dulu begitu. Tapi semakin kesini mungkin kita semakin adaptasi ya.. sudah tau aku harus begini, harus begitu ya. Dan alhamdulillah waktu kemarin anak-anak aku kasih tahu soal COVID-19 dengan menyuruh pakai masker begitu mereka patuh. Saat orang lain tidak pakai masker saat pergi kemana-mana.. aku dari rumah itu sudah bawa tempat masker dan aku langsung otomatis maskeran. Cuma sekarang karena sudah ada aturan boleh ga pakai masker anakku bilang "ga usah pakai ya ma" hehe gitu. Tapi kita tetap sedia walau ga pakai" (Wawancara dengan informan Rw, tanggal 6 Juni 2022)

"There's a lot. Anxiety was very anxious. When I get home from work, sometimes I'm already taking a shower here, until I get home to shower again. How often is that.. what is the term for it.. catching a cold every day. When go to work place take a shower, before going home to shower, arrive at the house shower again. Anyway, until I did.. until my son wanted to go where I was told to wear a mask. I was the most fussy about it yesterday. Because he was so scared. I know the patient's condition is like that, I'm afraid that my child will get it. I, my husband, and the child don't get infected. The stress level is high. I used to be. But the more we come here, maybe the more we adapt, right.. I already know I have to do this, I have to do that. And thank God, yesterday I told my children about COVID-19 by telling them to wear masks once they obeyed. When other people don't wear masks when they go anywhere... I've already brought the mask holder from home and I immediately put the mask on automatically. Only now because there are rules it's okay not to wear a mask, my son says "no need to wear it, mom" hehe. But we are still ready even if we don't use it" (Interview with Rw informant, June 6, 2022)

The same thing was also expressed by informant Ha. Informant Ha revealed that she had wrapped his cellphone in plastic when the case of the spread of COVID-19 was on the rise. Besides that, she will spray everything with disinfectant, change clothes when she comes home, and of course take a shower as an anticipation that she does before meeting his family.

"Dulu waktu awal-awal COVID-19 ini naik daun itu saya handphone saja dikasih plastik. Sebelum masuk saja saya semprot-semprot semua, mandi, baju saya langsung saya masukkan mesin cuci gitu. Kekhawatiran sekarang sudah luntur, maksudnya sudah biasa. Sekarang paling cuma ganti baju, mandi sudah gitu. Apalagi kan kita baju ganti disini sebelum pulang, jadi pulang sudah ganti baju" (Wawancara dengan informan Ha, tanggal 2 Juni 2022)

"In the past, when COVID-19 was on the rise, I just gave my cell phone a plastic bag. Before I just go in, I spray everything, take a shower, I put my clothes in the washing machine right away. Anxiety is now gone, the meaning is normal. Now at least just change clothes, take a shower. What's more, we change clothes here before going home, so when we go home, we already have changed clothes" (Interview with informant Ha, June 2, 2022)

The purpose of the various needs is, of course, to create a position of interaction in the adjustment process for health workers to anticipate the occurrence of transmission and the risk of exposure to COVID-19 before meeting with family members at home. In accordance with the informant's statement above, it can be seen that the requirements needed by health workers before interacting with their families at home are bathing, changing clothes, and other things that are anticipatory things they can do.

3.2 Expectations

Communication and interaction between health workers and family members is, of course, unavoidable. Good communication between health workers and family members is an important key

in fostering a deep sense of attachment and mutual need. Because with good communication, it can produce understanding among family members.

Expectations are patterns that are expected to occur. Related to this research, expectation is a pattern predicted by health workers about what will happen before they meet family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by informant Ek, when she felt certain symptoms because she worked in the medical laboratory for handling COVID-19. She will ask her family members to keep a distance from her and she will wear a mask as a personal protection.

> *"Kalau untuk saya sendiri, ketika merasakan gejala apa, ga enak atau gimana. Saya pasti minta jaga jarak sama keluarga dengan pakai masker dan jangan dekat-dekat saya begitu"* (Wawancara dengan informan Ek, tanggal 3 Juni 2022)

> "For myself, when I feel what symptoms, it's not good or what. I definitely ask to keep my family distance by wearing a mask and don't come near me like that" (Interview with informant Ek, 3 June 2022)

Informant Ew also revealed something that was not much different. Before going home to meet her family, at the hospital she would take a shower and when she got home she would bathe again. Because she will feel more confident when she showers twice before interacting with family at home.

> *"Kalau saya kan disini mandi tuh, mau pulang itu mandi dulu. Walaupun saya sampai rumah sudah mandi, saya ga nyekel anak saya dan ibu saya. Langsung ke kamar mandi dan mandi lagi. Saya lebih percaya 2 kali. Soalnya kan di jalan juga ga tahu nanti gimana, begitu. Pokoknya sebelum nyentuh ibu saya, sebelum nyentuh anak saya, sebelum saya kena barang di rumah saya, saya mandi dulu"* (Wawancara dengan informan Ew, tanggal 6 Juni 2022)

> "If I'm here, before going home I will take a shower first. Even though I got home and had a shower, I didn't touch my child and my mother. Go straight to the bathroom and shower again. I trust 2 more times. It's because you don't know what's going to happen on the road either. Anyway, before touching my mother, before touching my child, before I holding anything in my house, I take a shower first" (Interview with informant Ew, June 6, 2022)

The same expectation was also expressed by the informant Vn. She revealed that she still adheres to health protocols, besides that she will eat healthy food and maintain her health. When she feels symptoms such as cough or runny nose she will keep her distance from her family members and immediately see a doctor.

> *"Ya tetap prokes itu. Terus biasa makan makanan yang sehat seperti buah, minum air putih, dijaga kesehatannya aja. Sama kalau batuk-batuk, pilek-pilek, ooh jaga jarak. Gitu aja sih mba, cepat-cepat periksa gitu"* (Wawancara dengan informan Vn, tanggal 9 Juni 2022)

> "Yes, keep that health protocol. Other than that it is to eat healthy foods such as fruit, drink water, take care of your health. Same with coughs, colds, ooh.. keep your distance. That's all, hurry up and check it out" (Interview with Vn informant, June 9, 2022)

Based on the statements of the informants above, broadly speaking, the hope of health workers to interact with their family members is to comply with health protocols. Through this, they continue to comply with health protocols in order to keep family members from being exposed to the virus, it

is hoped that they will be able to bring a good interaction between health workers and family members.

3.3 Desires

Desire is something to be achieved or expected to occur in the communication and interaction of health workers with family members at home. Researchers found that the wishes of health workers regarding the position of interaction they want to build in the family after the COVID-19 pandemic can be passed.

Informant Ek expressed her wish that when the COVID-19 pandemic is over, her family will continue to maintain cleanliness and health. In addition, communication interactions are expected to remain well established with the understanding and attention of family members. She also hoped that when the pandemic really ended, the children could go back to school as usual so that it could ease the burden on parents at home in providing subject matter.

> *"Pengennya untuk kebersihan tetap ya, harus cuci tangan dan sebagainya. Pengennya komunikasi ya tetap terjalin, sebenarnya ketika kita ditanyain "capek apa ga?" itu sudah senang kok. Karena komunikasi kan penting. Harapan saya kedepannya juga semoga pandemi benar-benar sudah berakhir dan anak-anak bisa masuk sekolah tatap muka seperti biasanya. Sehingga bisa meringankan beban orang tua dalam memberi materi pelajaran. Karena selama pandemi orang tua juga harus mempelajari materi pelajaran anak agar dapat disampaikan ke anak untuk mereka mudah menjawab soal-soal yang diberikan oleh guru mba"* (Wawancara dengan informan Ek, tanggal 3 Juni 2022)

> "I want to keep it clean, I have to wash my hands and so on. We want communication to be maintained, actually when we are asked, "Are you tired or not?" it made me happy. Because communication is important. My hope in the future is that the pandemic will really end and the children can go to school face-to-face as usual. So that it can ease the burden on parents in providing lesson material. Because during the pandemic parents also have to study their children's subject matter so that it can be conveyed to their children so that they can easily answer the questions given by the teacher" (Interview with informant Ek, June 3, 2022)

Not much different from what was expressed by informant Ek, informant Vn expressed her desire after the pandemic passed while maintaining health and her child could return to full day school. In addition, she hopes that she will not wear a mask again and that everything will return to normal as before and communication can run smoothly.

> *"Setelah pandemi lewat ya mungkin ga pakai masker lagi yang pertama. Sumpek kan mba?. Terus yang kedua mungkin karena kemarin kan kalau kami di kesehatan, kalau ada pasien COVID-19 kan kita pakai APD lengkap itu mba. Itu kami pakai APD kalau mau nafas aja susah loh mba. Temanku itu dorong pasien dari lantai 1 sampai lantai 3 dia itu berhenti di jalan saking ga kuat gitu. Semoga harapannya kalau sudah ga pandemi pakai baju biasa lagi, ga usah pakai masker, ga usah jaga jarak. Kalau misal batuk dan pilek pun dikasih obat sudah gitu. Dan apa ya, dulu kan pas COVID-19 itu kantin yang buka cuma kantin dalam, yang diluar ga. Jadi kami itu harus order lewat Gojek begitu kan menyita waktu lama kalau buat kami. Oh di rumahnya kalau sudah ga pandemi? Kalau sudah ga pandemi ya apa namanya tetap menjaga kesehatan kayak gitu, terus maunya anaknya full day lagi lah sekolahnya. Terus bapak dan ibu ke masjid juga sudah longgar kan, kalau dulu kan takut mba ke masjid, ke pasar gitu apa pilih yang sepi-sepi kayak gitu. Kalau dulu kan ga begitu, pasti ya ke pasar aja gitu. Biar normal lagi lah. Iya semuanya berjalan lancar"* (Wawancara dengan informan Vn, tanggal 9 Juni 2022)

> "After the pandemic passes, first, maybe not wearing masks anymore. Not comfortable right? Then the second, maybe because if we are in the health sector, if there were COVID-19 patients, we used the full personal protective equipment (PPE). That's why we use PPE if you want to breathe, it's hard. My friend pushed the patient from the 1st floor to the 3rd floor he stopped on the road because he wasn't strong enough. Hopefully, if the pandemic is over, wear normal clothes again, don't need to wear a mask, don't have to keep your distance. For example, coughs and colds are given medicine. And what's the matter, in the past, during COVID-19, the canteen that was open was only the inside canteen, the one outside or not. So we had to order via Gojek, so it would take a long time for us. Oh at house when it's not a pandemic? If it's not a pandemic, maintaining health, then you want your child to go to school for a full day. Then the father and mother go to the mosque as usual too, because before they were afraid to go to the mosque, they go to the market, choose a quiet one like that. If it wasn't like that in the past, I'd definitely go to the market like that. Let's be normal again. Yes, everything went smoothly" (Interview with informant Vn, June 9, 2022)

From the research findings submitted by the informants above, it can be seen that the wish that is expected after the COVID-19 pandemic can be passed by health workers in communication interactions within their families is to continue to run smoothly as before the pandemic occured. Of course, maintaining the health of the family becomes the main thing after the pandemic has passed. In addition to activities that previously had to return home during the pandemic, they hope that these activities can return to normal as before the pandemic occurred. Adaptation is the most important part for informants in adjusting to carrying out their daily activities as health workers and interactions within the family during the pandemic.

4. Conclusion

In the process of family interaction with health workers during the pandemic, this study found that there is a requirement that must be met in order to be able to provide interaction in an effort to adapt to anticipate the occurrence of transmission and the risk of COVID-19 before meeting with family members at home. What they requirement to do is take a shower, change clothes, and other things they can do. Furthermore, the expectations that health workers have to interact with their family members is to comply with health protocols. This hope is expected to bring about a good interaction between health workers and their family members. Finally, it is desire that after the COVID-19 pandemic can be passed, the communication interaction process within the family of health workers will continue to run smoothly as before the pandemic occurred. Of course, maintaining the health of the family becomes the main thing after the pandemic has passed. In addition to activities that previously had to return home during the pandemic, they hope that these activities can return to normal as before the pandemic occurred. So with the adaptation of interactions, health workers are able to adjust themselves when they have to go home before meeting with family during the pandemic, and can make communication interactions run smoothly as they should.

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