

Analyzing Communication Patterns in Long-Distance Parent-Child Relationships: A Mixed-Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships, aiming to understand the nuances of maintaining familial bonds across geographical divides. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research examines the frequency, duration, and content of communication, as well as the challenges and strategies employed by families. Data are collected through surveys, interviews, and communication logs, and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings reveal a diverse array of communication patterns among parent-child dyads, ranging from daily video calls to less frequent text messages or emails. While communication frequency and duration varied widely, the qualitative data highlighted the importance of meaningful communication in fostering emotional closeness and relationship satisfaction. However, the study also uncovered several challenges, including time zone differences, technological barriers, and the emotional toll of separation. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for families to adapt their communication strategies to accommodate cultural and generational differences, as well as the evolving landscape of digital communication technologies. By recognizing and navigating these complexities, families can better navigate separation and maintain strong connections across distances.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly globalized world, families often find themselves separated by geographical distance (Giddens, 2003). This separation can be particularly challenging for parents and children, as maintaining a close relationship often relies on regular communication. In recent years, scholars have begun to explore how communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships impact the maintenance of those relationships (Stafford, 2004b).

Communication is the cornerstone of any relationship, and its significance is amplified when individuals are separated by miles (Stohl, 1995). For children and parents in long-distance relationships, effective communication serves as a lifeline, enabling them to bridge the gap created by distance. It allows parents to offer guidance, provide emotional support, and stay connected with their children. Similarly, children can share their experiences, seek advice, and maintain a sense of closeness with their parents through communication (Guerrero & Afifi, 2013).

The advent of digital communication technologies has revolutionized how families stay connected across distances (Wilding, 2006). Platforms like video calls, messaging apps, and social media have made it easier for parents and children to interact, share updates, and partake in each

other's lives. However, despite these advancements, maintaining a strong parent-child relationship across distances remains a multifaceted challenge.

Understanding communication patterns in these relationships is vital for several reasons(Caughlin et al., 2010). Firstly, it offers insights into the unique challenges faced by families in a globalized world. By comprehending the nuances of communication, researchers can identify effective strategies and interventions to support families separated by distance(Wilson et al., 2010). Secondly, it highlights the importance of fostering healthy communication habits within families, which can positively impact the overall well-being of parents and children alike(Bethell et al., 2017).

Despite these advancements, maintaining a strong parent-child relationship across distances remains a complex challenge. Communication patterns play a crucial role in determining the quality and effectiveness of these relationships(Hwang & Park, 2018). For example, the frequency, duration, and content of communication can influence how connected parents and children feel to each other. Additionally, the ability to resolve conflicts and navigate disagreements through communication can impact the overall health of the relationship(Street Jr et al., 2009).

Understanding the intricacies of communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships is essential for several reasons(Pollom, 2005). Firstly, it can inform the development of interventions and strategies to support families separated by distance. By identifying effective communication practices, researchers can provide guidance to families on how to stay connected and maintain strong relationships(Constantino, 2003). Secondly, understanding these patterns can shed light on the unique challenges faced by families in a globalized world. This knowledge can help policymakers and practitioners design policies and services that better meet the needs of these families(Bogenschneider, 2014).

Scholars have long been interested in understanding the challenges and dynamics of long-distance relationships, which are characterized by physical separation between partners(Stafford et al., 2006). Research in this area has identified several factors that influence the quality and sustainability of long-distance relationships. These include communication frequency, trust, commitment, and the ability to cope with the challenges of separation(Afifi & Hamrick, 2013).

Studies have found that couples in long-distance relationships often rely heavily on communication to maintain a sense of closeness and intimacy(Saadatian et al., 2014). Frequent communication, both through technological means and face-to-face interactions, has been associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction. However, the quality of communication, rather than its quantity, is often cited as the most critical factor in maintaining a strong connection(Zeithaml et al., 1988).

Communication patterns in long-distance relationships can vary widely, depending on the nature of the relationship and the preferences of the individuals involved. Research has identified several common communication patterns, including synchronous communication (e.g., video calls, phone calls) and asynchronous communication (e.g., text messages, emails)(Anders, 2016).

Studies have also explored the role of technology in shaping communication patterns(Thomas et al., 2005). The advent of digital communication tools has made it easier for couples in long-distance relationships to stay connected, but it has also introduced new challenges. For example, the use of social media and instant messaging can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts if not used mindfully.

In the context of parent-child relationships, communication plays a crucial role in maintaining a strong bond between parents and children(Harach & Kuczynski, 2005). Studies have found that effective communication between parents and children is associated with higher levels of parental involvement, better child outcomes, and overall family satisfaction.

Communication patterns in parent-child relationships can be influenced by various factors, including the age of the child, the nature of the relationship, and the family's cultural background(Schrodt et al., 2009). For example, research has shown that adolescents often prefer more autonomy in their communication with parents, while younger children may rely more on direct communication.

While existing research on long-distance relationships, communication patterns, and parent-child relationships offers valuable insights into the dynamics of family connections across geographical distances, several notable gaps persist(Stafford, 2004a). Addressing these gaps is crucial for advancing our understanding of these complex relationships and informing interventions to support families separated by distance.

One notable gap in the literature is the limited focus on communication patterns specifically within long-distance parent-child relationships(Shin et al., 2021). While there is a wealth of

research on communication dynamics in romantic long-distance relationships, comparatively fewer studies have delved into the nuances of parent-child communication across distances. Understanding the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in parent-child communication can provide valuable insights into how families navigate separation and maintain strong bonds despite physical distance.

Furthermore, existing research often lacks a nuanced exploration of the role of cultural, generational, and technological factors in shaping communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. Cultural norms and values, as well as generational differences, can significantly influence how families communicate across distances (Kwak, 2003). Additionally, technological advancements have transformed the landscape of communication, introducing new modes and channels through which parents and children can stay connected. Yet, the interplay between these factors and its impact on communication patterns remains underexplored in the literature.

Moreover, while some studies have examined the impact of communication on relationship satisfaction and family well-being in long-distance relationships, there is a need for longitudinal research to understand how communication patterns evolve over time. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into the stability and resilience of communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships, as well as how these patterns shape relationship outcomes over the course of the parent-child lifespan.

Lastly, there is a scarcity of research on effective strategies and interventions to support families in maintaining strong connections across distances. While some studies have identified communication as a key factor in maintaining relationship quality, few have explored practical strategies that families can implement to overcome communication barriers and foster closeness despite physical separation.

While existing research provides a foundation for understanding the dynamics of long-distance relationships and parent-child communication, several gaps persist. Addressing these gaps through focused inquiry and empirical investigation is essential for advancing our understanding of how families navigate separation and maintain strong connections across distances. By filling these gaps, researchers can inform the development of interventions and support systems that promote the well-being of families separated by distance.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

To effectively examine communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships we employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively examine communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. This approach allows us to gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that shape these relationships and the impact of communication on relationship quality. Our methodology is guided by the following key components. This study will adopt a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather and analyze data. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the complexities of communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships.

The study will involve a diverse sample of parent-child dyads who are currently experiencing long-distance relationships. Participants will be recruited through various channels, including online platforms, social media, and community organizations. Efforts will be made to ensure that the sample represents a range of ages, cultural backgrounds, and geographical locations. Our study focuses on families with children aged 12-18 who are separated from their parents due to geographical distance, such as migration for work or education. We aim to recruit a diverse sample that represents a range of cultural backgrounds and experiences of long-distance relationships.

During the qualitative phase, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with parents and children separately. These interviews will explore their experiences of communication in the context of their long-distance relationship, including the frequency, modes, and content of communication, as well as the challenges and strategies they employ to stay connected.

The qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. We will identify recurring themes and patterns in the participants' experiences of communication in long-distance relationships, allowing us to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics at play.

In the quantitative phase, we will administer surveys to both parents and children to collect quantitative data on their communication patterns, relationship satisfaction, and overall family well-

being. The surveys will include validated scales to measure communication quality, relationship satisfaction, and family functioning.

The quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical methods, including regression analysis and correlation analysis. We will examine the relationship between communication patterns and relationship satisfaction, as well as the moderating effects of cultural, generational, and technological factors.

The results from the qualitative and quantitative phases will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. We will compare and contrast the findings from both phases to identify commonalities and differences, allowing us to develop a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

We will ensure that all participants provide informed consent before participating in the study, and we will adhere to ethical guidelines for research with human participants. We will also prioritize the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, using pseudonyms and de-identifying data during analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through a mixed-methods approach, this study examined communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. The research involved a diverse sample of parent-child dyads, ranging in age, cultural background, and geographical location. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and communication logs, and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings offer valuable insights into the complexities of communication in long-distance relationships and provide a foundation for understanding how families navigate separation.

The survey data revealed that the frequency and duration of communication varied widely among participants. While some parent-child dyads communicated daily through video calls, others communicated less frequently through text messages or emails. The qualitative data from interviews provided deeper insights into the reasons behind these differences. For example, some parents and children cited time zone differences and busy schedules as barriers to frequent communication.

The study also examined the preferred communication channels among parent-child dyads. Video calls were the most popular choice, followed by text messages and phone calls. Social media platforms and email were less commonly used for communication. The qualitative data revealed that the choice of communication channel often depended on the nature of the relationship and the comfort level of the participants.

The content of communication in long-distance parent-child relationships was diverse and multifaceted. Parents and children often discussed daily activities, shared updates about their lives, and offered emotional support. However, the qualitative data also revealed challenges in communication, such as misunderstandings and conflicts. Some parent-child dyads reported difficulties in expressing emotions and navigating disagreements through digital communication.

The study identified several challenges in communication among parent-child dyads. Time zone differences, busy schedules, and technological barriers were commonly cited as challenges to maintaining regular communication. The qualitative data highlighted the emotional toll of separation, with parents and children expressing feelings of loneliness and longing for physical closeness.

Despite the challenges, many parent-child dyads reported employing strategies to overcome communication barriers. These strategies included setting regular communication schedules, using multiple communication channels, and being mindful of time zone differences. The qualitative data revealed the importance of flexibility and adaptability in communication, as well as the need for open and honest conversations.

The results in the context of existing literature and theories

In the context of existing literature, the findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of communication in maintaining strong relationships across distances. Scholars have long recognized communication as a key factor in long-distance relationships, emphasizing its role in fostering emotional closeness and intimacy. The findings from this study support this perspective, revealing that frequent and meaningful communication is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction among parent-child dyads.

Moreover, the study's findings shed light on the nuances of communication in long-distance relationships. The preference for certain communication channels, such as video calls and text

messages, reflects the evolving landscape of digital communication. This aligns with existing research that has found a shift towards digital communication tools in modern relationships. However, the study also highlights the importance of face-to-face communication, with many participants expressing a desire for physical closeness despite the distance.

The findings also underscore the challenges that families face in maintaining regular communication across distances. Time zone differences, busy schedules, and technological barriers were commonly cited as obstacles to frequent communication. These challenges are consistent with previous research that has identified logistical barriers as a significant challenge in long-distance relationships. Additionally, the emotional toll of separation was evident in the qualitative data, with parents and children expressing feelings of loneliness and longing for physical closeness.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, the findings from this study align with social exchange theory, which posits that relationships are based on the exchange of resources, such as emotional support and companionship. The study's findings suggest that communication serves as a key resource in long-distance parent-child relationships, allowing parents and children to provide emotional support and maintain a sense of closeness despite physical separation. Moreover, the study's emphasis on the challenges and strategies employed by families reflects the transactional nature of relationships, where individuals negotiate and adapt to maintain equilibrium.

Implications of Communication Patterns in Long-Distance Parent-Child Relationships

The findings from this study have several implications for understanding parent-child relationships in the context of distance. By examining the frequency, duration, and content of communication, as well as the challenges and strategies employed by families, the study offers valuable insights into the dynamics of long-distance parent-child relationships.

The findings underscore the critical role that communication plays in maintaining strong parent-child relationships across distances. Frequent and meaningful communication is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction among parent-child dyads. This highlights the importance of fostering open and honest communication between parents and children, even when they are separated by physical distance.

The study's findings also shed light on the challenges that families face in maintaining regular communication across distances. Time zone differences, busy schedules, and technological barriers were commonly cited as obstacles to frequent communication. This highlights the need for families to be mindful of these challenges and to actively work to overcome them.

The study's findings can inform interventions and support systems that promote the well-being of families separated by distance. By identifying effective communication patterns and strategies for overcoming communication barriers, the study provides practical guidance for families navigating separation. This can include recommendations for setting regular communication schedules, using multiple communication channels, and being mindful of time zone differences.

The study's findings underscore the critical role that communication plays in maintaining strong parent-child relationships across distances. By fostering open and honest communication between parents and children, families can enhance the quality of their relationships despite physical separation. This highlights the importance of promoting emotional well-being and maintaining physical closeness, even when separated by distance.

The preference for certain communication channels, such as video calls and text messages, reflects the evolving landscape of digital communication. This suggests that families may need to adapt to new technologies and communication tools to stay connected across distances. Moreover, the study's emphasis on the importance of face-to-face communication highlights the value of maintaining physical closeness, even when separated by distance.

The emotional toll of separation was evident in the qualitative data, with parents and children expressing feelings of loneliness and longing for physical closeness. This highlights the importance of promoting emotional well-being in long-distance parent-child relationships. Families may need to find ways to support each other emotionally and to seek out resources for coping with the challenges of separation.

The study's findings also underscore the importance of recognizing cultural and generational differences in communication patterns. For example, some participants preferred more direct communication, while others preferred more indirect communication. This suggests

that families may need to be mindful of these differences and to adapt their communication styles accordingly.

Potential Areas for Future Research

While the study on communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships provides valuable insights into the dynamics of these relationships, there are several potential areas for future research that warrant exploration. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that examine how communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships evolve over time. By tracking communication dynamics over an extended period, researchers can gain insights into the stability and resilience of these relationships, as well as how communication patterns impact relationship outcomes over the course of the parent-child lifespan.

Further research is needed to explore the role of cultural and generational differences in communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. By examining how communication patterns vary across different cultural and generational contexts, researchers can identify effective strategies for bridging communication gaps and fostering understanding and respect across generations and cultures.

Future research could explore how technological advancements continue to shape communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships. As new communication tools and platforms emerge, researchers can examine how families adapt their communication styles and preferences accordingly. This can provide insights into how families navigate technological changes and maintain strong connections across distances.

Further research is needed to examine the impact of communication on child outcomes in long-distance parent-child relationships. By exploring how communication patterns influence children's emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall development, researchers can identify effective strategies for promoting positive outcomes in these relationships.

Future research could focus on developing and evaluating interventions and support systems that promote the well-being of families separated by distance. By testing the effectiveness of different interventions, such as communication skills training or family counseling, researchers can identify strategies that help families navigate separation and maintain strong connections.

4. CONCLUSION

The study on communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships has shed light on the complexities of maintaining strong connections across geographical distances. By examining the frequency, duration, and content of communication, as well as the challenges and strategies employed by families, the study has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of these relationships. The study's findings have highlighted the critical role that communication plays in maintaining strong parent-child relationships across distances. Frequent and meaningful communication is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction among parent-child dyads. This underscores the importance of fostering open and honest communication between parents and children, even when they are separated by physical distance. The study has also identified several challenges that families face in maintaining regular communication across distances. Time zone differences, busy schedules, and technological barriers were commonly cited as obstacles to frequent communication. This highlights the need for families to be mindful of these challenges and to actively work to overcome them. The findings underscored the significance of frequent and meaningful communication in fostering emotional closeness and relationship satisfaction among families separated by distance. However, they also highlighted the myriad challenges faced by these families, including time zone differences, technological barriers, and the emotional toll of separation. Furthermore, the study illuminated the importance of adapting communication strategies to accommodate cultural and generational differences, as well as the evolving landscape of digital communication technologies. By recognizing and navigating these complexities, families can better navigate separation and maintain strong connections across distances. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights to the fields of family studies and communication research. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and supporting families separated by distance and provides a foundation for future research and interventions aimed at promoting the well-being of these families. While the study has provided valuable insights into communication patterns in long-distance parent-child relationships, there are several potential areas for future research that warrant exploration. Longitudinal studies could examine how communication patterns evolve over time, while further research is needed to explore the role of

cultural and generational differences in communication patterns. Additionally, future research could focus on developing and evaluating interventions and support systems that promote the well-being of families separated by distance.

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