

Chapter 16

Family Communication and COVID-19: Communication Dynamics During the Stay-at-Home Period

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's lifestyles as well as communication processes and family communication in very different ways. Some of these are social isolation and physical distance during the pandemic period. This situation has led to family members having less face-to-face contact with each other, reduced visits to relatives due to travel restrictions, and limiting non-family relationships. This situation affected the communication dynamics within the family and strained the emotional bonds between family members. During the pandemic period, dependence on and use of communication technologies has increased. Families continued their communication through virtual platforms and used tools such as video calling, messaging, and social media more. In this regard, the aim of this chapter is to address the communication difficulties faced by families during the COVID-19 pandemic and to offer solutions to develop healthy communication dynamics during the stay-at-home period.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 epidemic has also affected family communication on a global scale. During the pandemic, governments have decided to impose a lockdown of cities, regions and countries. This situation also pushed the families living in these places to rearrange their communication structure. Although strict lockdown rules were eased after the effects of the pandemic subsided, families tried to adapt to the changes. This situation has increased the importance of family communication. Because during the closure process, through intra-family communication, some families were positively affected by the

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closure and managed to communicate effectively with each other, while others were unable to establish this communication and were negatively affected (Mikucki-Enyart & Maguire, 2021, p.145).

The COVID-19 epidemic has redesigned the patterns of daily life (Fuchs, 2020, p.376). This change in daily life has also affected family communication and the relationships of family members. Family members who had to stay at home with the pandemic found themselves interacting with each other more. This situation has allowed family members to get closer to each other and get to know each other more closely, and has generally increased their face-to-face communication rather than technology-mediated communication (Sharma, 2021, p.430). However, increasing communication does not always mean that positive or healthy communication will increase. In other words, the epidemic may have brought family members closer to each other, but this does not necessarily indicate that the family members communicate well with each other. In such cases, the decrease in communication within the family may lead to family members falling apart and increasing the relational distance even if the physical distance is close. In this sense, the quality of the content of the communication becomes important. As a result of poor communication, some family members may face exclusion (Dorrance Hall et al., 2022, p.57). Considering this, it is a concept that directs and determines behaviors such as communication, social support and coping. How the epidemic affects the way individuals within the family communicate and how constructive and supportive conversations along with positive communication affect family communication, as well as what effects negative conversations and unhealthy communication have on family communication (Maguire, 2012, p.23).

In this regard, the aim of this section is to address the communication difficulties faced by families during the COVID-19 epidemic and to offer solutions to develop healthy communication dynamics during the stay-at-home period. The epidemic may cause changes and increased stress in family relationships. The department aims to guide families in strengthening their communication skills and make the stay-at-home process healthier and more supportive. This book chapter will help understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communication dynamics between family members by focusing on family communication in the field of communication studies. It will help families strengthen their communication skills and create a healthy communication environment by providing analysis and solution suggestions for communication difficulties that arise during the stay-at-home period. Additionally, this chapter will provide a resource that can be used to guide families throughout the community by addressing common issues families face during the pandemic. In the light of this information, the planned study aims to offer some solution suggestions to the field. These; Developing active listening and empathy skills within the family, encouraging open and honest communication between family members, learning and applying conflict management strategies, using positive language and tone in communication, learning stress management techniques and applying them within the family, sharing and supporting families' concerns about the epidemic. It includes keeping communication channels open for It is believed that these solution suggestions will help family members develop a better understanding of communication both with each other and with people in other segments of society, help families create a healthier and more supportive communication environment during the epidemic, and make it easier for family members to support each other (Maguire, 2012, p.23).

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