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Personal communication as a phenomenon in Algerian society: an ethnographic study on a sample of families in the state of M'Sila

YAHIA Takeddine and BELABES Taqiyeddine

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in the province of M'Sila, Algeria, to understand the patterns of personal communication the patterns refer to the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, or emotions between two or more individuals in a direct and personal manner, typically through verbal or nonverbal means such as face-to-face conversations, phone calls, video chats, or written messages. It can occur between friends, family members, within families and its importance in strengthening family relationships. The researchers used Ethnographic methodology as a technique to reach the participants observation and interview tools to analyze the patterns of personal communication within families. The study showed that personal communication within families is continuous and characterized by affection, love, and respect, and there are differences in personal communication patterns between older and younger generations. The study also indicated that personal communication plays an important role in building family relationships, enhancing communication, and empathy among family members. The results of this study can be used to design training and educational programs to promote personal communication within families and enhance family relationships, thus promoting family health and stability.

KEY TERMS: personal communication, communication phenomenon, ethnographic methodology, Algerian society, M'Sila state.

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Author/s details:

YAHIA TAKIEDDINE, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Department of Information and Communication Sciences, University of M'Sila, Algeria. Email: takeddine.yahia@univ-msila.dz

BELABES TAQIYEDDINE, Department of Information and Communication Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of M'Sila, Algeria. Email: taqiyeddine.belabes@univ-msila.dz

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the exchange of information and ideas between individuals or groups and is vital in any society. In Algerian society, communication plays an important role in daily life and social interaction. The phenomenon of communication in Algerian society is characterized by the diversity of languages used in communication, as people in Algeria speak Arabic, Amazigh, and French. This means that oral and written communication is conducted in more than one language, posing a challenge for effective communication between individuals and groups. Algerian culture also affects the way communication is conducted in society. For example, communication in Algerian society is characterized by warmth and hospitality, where greetings and salutations are exchanged when individuals meet. People also pay attention to small details in communication, such as using the appropriate language and expressing oneself in a polite and respectful manner. In addition, personal communication is highly valued in Algerian society, where people prefer face-to-face communication, as seen in local customs and traditions, such as drinking tea together and sharing meals. Communication represents a vital part of Algerian society, serving as a means for individuals and groups to communicate and interact, contributing to the building of social relationships and the promotion of local culture. It is important to enhance communication in Algerian society. This study aims to analyze and break down the patterns of personal communication in Algerian society, particularly through studying a sample of families in the M'Sila region to understand personal communication patterns within these families. Data will be collected through personal interviews and observations and will be analyzed using Ethnographic methodology. The results of this study are expected to contribute to enhance our understanding of communication patterns in Algerian society and the factors that affect them. It will also help guide efforts to enhance effective communication skills and promote understanding among individuals and different cultures in Algerian society.

BACKGROUND

Personal communication is an important aspect in Algerian families, as it widens the scope of social relationships and interactions between family members. Algerian families are known to be conservative and value close social relationships, particularly among different generations (Wambui and Nzioka, 2018). Personal communication is typically through visits between families, where direct communication, exchange of information and news, and emotional closeness are established. It is considered a vital means to maintain familial ties and strengthen family relationships (Baxter and Braithwaite, 2019). The Algerian family is considered a fundamental unit in Algerian society and plays a significant role in upbringing generations and promoting cultural values and traditions. Personal communication effectively achieves family communication and strengthens familial and social bonds (Osofisan, 2015).

However, personal communication should be conducted with mutual respect and consideration for the social and religious customs and traditions that Algerian family's value (Daramola, 2019). Personal communication is one of the main ways of communication between individuals in societies, where information, ideas, experiences, and events are exchanged among individuals and groups. The functions of personal communication in societies include the following:

Personal communication serves several important functions in enhancing social relationships, transmitting information and ideas, influencing opinions and behaviors, supporting teamwork, improving mental health, enhancing trust and respect, and ultimately contributing to building and strengthening communities (Bevan and Sole, 2020).

Through personal communication, individuals and groups can improve the quality of their social life by fostering stronger relationships with each other. By transmitting information and ideas, personal communication can increase understanding and cooperation between individuals. Additionally, personal communication can influence the opinions and behaviors of individuals, helping to change attitudes and thinking (Osofisan, 2015).

In a team setting, personal communication can support teamwork and increase productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, personal communication can improve mental health by reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness (Odiakosa, 2018). By enhancing trust and respect between individuals and groups, personal communication contributes to improving social relationships.

Overall, personal communication plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life in societies and helps to build and strengthen communities. (Akintayo and Atolagbe, 2020).

Family communication in Algerian society: types, forms, and circumstances

Effective communication is essential for building and maintaining strong family relationships. There are various forms of communication that are crucial in family dynamics (Takyi-Boadu and Mensah, 2017). Verbal communication, for instance, entails direct discussions between family members and can cover both personal and general topics (Nwabueze, 2016). On the other hand, nonverbal communication involves expressions like eye contact, smiles, touch, and other non-spoken actions. Written communication, such as texts, messages, and emails, is a convenient way of staying in touch when physical presence is impossible. Family communication encompasses interactions between relatives, friends, and family members, especially during celebrations, visits, and special occasions (Dzokoto, 2016). Emergency communication is another critical type of communication that aims to connect family members during emergencies and coordinate efforts to deal with crises (Njiraine and Wangombe, 2020). By these different communication methods, families can strengthen their relationships and foster open communication, even during challenging times. (Bevan and Sole, 2020). The challenges facing personal contact in families of the most important aspects that affect the health and stability of family relationships. However, many individuals and families face several challenges in this regard. Numerous individuals and families today struggle to maintain personal contact due to the pressures of daily life, resulting in a lack of time. Additionally, while social media offers a convenient means of communication, it may hinder effective and meaningful personal communication in families, leading to addiction. Some individuals find it difficult to express their thoughts and emotions, posing a challenge to personal communication in households and families (Sibiya and Govender, 2017). Cultural and generational gaps can also lead to communication and understanding difficulties among family members, presenting another obstacle. Lastly, ineffective listening can further contribute to communication and comprehension issues between family members, which is a common challenge many families face. (Fitzpatrick and Vangelisti, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

There are African studies and literature that examine African social life and families. One such book is "The Arab Family in Black Africa" by Dr. Ahmed Babiker Othman, which discusses the development of the Arab family in Black Africa over time and the impact of Arab customs and traditions on marital and family life. The book also explores how globalization has influenced changes in customs and traditions within Arab families in Africa (Ashu, 2012). Another book, *The Experience of the African Family* by Professor Chikana Ashu, focuses on the personal lives of family members and how customs, traditions, and cultural values impact their interactions and challenges. The book also examines the transformations of the African family throughout history and the impact of political and economic conditions on family life (Ashu, 2012). An African Book under the African Family and Social Transformations" by Dr. John Omi discusses the family in Africa and the social transformations that the continent has witnessed. The book explores the impact of globalization, social, economic, and political changes on the family, its composition, and its challenges. Additionally, the book reviews religious, cultural, and historical issues that affect the lives of African families. *African Women and Marital Life*" by Nosevena Domb examines the challenges faced by African women in marital and family life and how these challenges have been influenced by social, cultural, and religious changes throughout history. The book also discusses the role of women in society, the challenges of women's empowerment, and the development of women's rights in Africa. *Family and Society in Africa*" by Professor John Middleton discusses the relationship between family and society in Africa and how customs, traditions, and social transformations affect family and community life. The book also examines the development of African society and the impact of social, political, and economic transformations on the family and society. These books shed light on family and family life in Africa and the impact of customs, traditions, and social transformations on it. They constitute an important reference for understanding African culture and its social and family life.

We used the ethnographic approach to analyze personal communication in an African country which is the Algerian society, specifically in the state of M'Sila. The ethnographic method is one of the most important tools used by social scientists and anthropologists to understand and analyze cultures and societies. It relies on field research and active participation in the daily life of the studied community (Owolabi and Oluwole, 2018).

We used it to analyze personal communication in Algerian society. After having the university's permission, the researchers actively participated in the daily lives of six Algerian families, observed and analyzed their behavior and personal communication methods in order to recognize the types of verbal and nonverbal communication.

The ethnographic approach provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the culture, customs, traditions, and personal communication in the studied community. Therefore, it can lead to more accurate and comprehensive results in social studies (Greene and Banerjee, 2008).

Research tools

Ethnographic observation was used in this study, where we recorded all important details accurately, documented the surrounding environment, social events, interactions, and communication with the six families in the study equally and with respect for their cultures and customs, while maintaining confidentiality and not disclosing the identities of participants or other personal information, and ensuring the accuracy and verification of recorded information before use. We rely on participant observation, which involves the researcher's participation in the social phenomenon they seek to describe and understand. Participant observation may be one of the most qualitative research tools in sociology and communication. However, it is impossible to classify, label, and categorize all the data resulting from participant observation in virtual communities.

Study sample

We selected a purposive sample of six Algerian families for this study. The researchers chose the participants in their sample based on their objectives and knowledge, without any restrictions or conditions, making it a non-representative sample of all viewpoints. However, it is a solid foundation for scientific analysis and a rich source of information that forms an appropriate basis for the researcher on the study topic. The researchers observed six families through participant observation and personal interviews over a period of more than six months to understand the personal communication patterns of families in the state of M'Sila.

RESULTS:

The results of Interpretation of observations and interviews explain the patterns of family communication in Algerian society based on the five Important Social Schools. These five schools of thought on personal communication and social relationships provide different perspectives on how an individual's identity and behavior are shaped by their social interactions, values, culture, and selective choices (Oetzel, and Ting-Toomey,2021). The school of social relations and the school of social interaction both acknowledge the importance of personal communication as a means of forming and reinforcing social relationships but differ in their focus on the role of community responses versus the broader influence of social relationships (Fitzpatrick and Vangelisti,2011). The school of values and culture emphasizes how personal communication can reinforce and assert an individual's values and identity (Montgomery,2016). The school of selective theory highlights the individual's agency in choosing personal communication and social interactions, which reflects their personality and position in society. Finally, the school of functional theory sees personal communication as a tool for maintaining and strengthening social bonds between individuals and groups within society.

In our qualitative analysis, we relied on several schools to understand family communication in the city of M'Sila. The school of social relations served as the basis for interpreting personal communication within families in M'Sila. By attempting to understand the forms and patterns of family communication based on personal relationships, which are influenced by various cultural and psychological components in societies. As for the school of values and culture, we analyzed the prevalent forms of communication based on the societal culture present in the Algerian context, specifically in the city of M'Sila. For example, we found that family communication within a single family may exhibit diverse social and ethical values from one individual to another. The values held by an educated and employed individual may differ from those of an uneducated and average-educated person. Through our interpretation of personal communication in M'Sila and the application of the selective school, we discovered that people in the city of M'Sila choose the communicative style that suits them and helps them build family relationships. Through our ethnographic observations, we concluded that social bonds within families in the province of M'Sila are governed by both verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. This led us to understand that family communication in the province of M'Sila can be interpreted from various cultural, psychological, functional, and even moral perspectives in order to comprehend the communicative Framework within families.

Analysis of family communication in Algerian society requires the interpretation of observations and interviews with family and community members, with the aim of understanding social dynamics and human relations inside and outside the family (Galvin and Braithwaite,2020). Careful analysis of observations and interviews requires attention to many factors, such as culture, traditions, customs, and social practices that influence family communication in Algerian society. Care must also be taken in the analysis and not to rush to make final conclusions, because family communication is affected by many complex and factors. In general, the analysis of family communication in Algerian society can include several areas, such as:

To conduct a thorough analysis of family communication in Algerian society, several factors need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, it is essential to understand the relationship between married couples and carefully analyze the causes of conflicts that may arise between them (Owolabi and Oluwole,2018). addressing them constructively. Secondly, the relationship between parents and children should be analyzed to study its impact on the psychological and social development of children (Alemu,2018). Thirdly, understanding the relationship between individuals within the family and the impact of social, economic, and cultural interactions on these relationships is crucial. Furthermore, analyzing the role of the family in society and the impact of external social relations on it is important. It is also necessary to examine the cultural and religious factors that affect family communication in Algerian society, and how they impact family and social relations. To achieve accurate conclusions, personal and psychological factors of family members must be considered, along with economic and social factors such as poverty, unemployment, health, and educational conditions (Owolabi and Oluwole,2018). Therefore, a precise and systematic analysis of the observations and interviews collected is required.

The analysis of family communication in Algerian society requires attention to many different factors and aspects and requires a systematic and accurate method for collecting and analyzing information. This study can help to better understand family and social relations in Algerian society, and to identify actions that can be taken to improve family communication and promote positive family relations (Miller and Knapp,2021).

The factors influencing personal communication within families in Algeria are as follows:

Several factors influence personal communication within families in Algeria. Social factors, such as social heritage, cultural values, and traditions, have a significant impact on personal communication patterns. Customs and traditions vary across regions and can shape family communication styles. Cultural diversity, represented by the diverse cultures and languages in Algeria, including Arabic, Amazigh, and the influence of past colonizers like the French, further contributes to variations in communication styles and understanding among family members. Economic factors also play a role, as the availability of financial resources and economic opportunities influences communication within families. Income levels and economic disparities between rural and urban areas can affect the ability of families to meet their needs and impact the quality of communication and interaction among family members. These social, cultural, and economic factors lead to variations in personal communication patterns within families across different communities in Algeria. Traditional communities may uphold customs and traditions, while urban communities may be influenced by social and technological changes. Social norms and community values significantly shape family communication patterns.

Basics of personal communication in families in the State of M'Sila:

After analyzing the observations and interviews we conducted with the six families, we found several basics that form personal communication in families in our study community. In the state of M'Sila, families place a great deal of importance on effective communication. Among the fundamentals of communication, active listening is considered crucial as it promotes trust and respect, while enhancing positive relationships between family members. Speaking honestly and avoiding deception also plays a crucial role in building trust among family members and the wider community. Additionally, mutual respect is emphasized, with every member of the family deserving to be treated with dignity and respect, and not subjected to verbal abuse or mistreatment. Clear expression is essential, with family members encouraged to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a concise and comprehensible manner, avoiding vague or ambiguous language.

Maintaining ongoing communication is also critical to the success of family relationships. This includes consistently engaging in conversations, actively listening to others, and sharing ideas, events, and different activities. Positive interactions, such as offering praise and support towards each other's goals, can have a tremendous impact on family dynamics. Showing an interest in the lives of others and paying attention to small details are also important components of building respect, appreciation, and care for each other. Finally, forgiveness and tolerance are vital, with family members encouraged to be forgiving and tolerant towards one another, as a means of fostering healthy and enduring relationships. Social schools of thought explaining the phenomenon of personal communication within families:

This social schools of thought are among the most important schools that explain the phenomenon of personal communication. These schools refer to the social theory that focuses on the role played by the social environment in shaping the individual's personality and determining their thinking and behavior patterns.

The social schools rely on the concept of social relationships and interactions practiced by individuals in their communities to understand the phenomenon of personal communication. These schools indicate that personal communication stems from the social relationships that individuals seek to form and maintain, and that personal

communication is a means to achieve these goals (Spitzberg and Cupach,2021).

DISCUSSION

Personal communication within Algerian families is also an important matter that helps to strengthen family relationships and achieve harmony between family members. However, some Algerian families may face problems in personal communication. To improve this communication, attention should be paid to daily communication. Family members should continue to talk and exchange conversations on general topics while respecting each other. Effective listening is one of the methods of effective communication, so individuals must listen well to the other party and respond positively. Family occasions should also be celebrated by exchanging gifts, celebrating holidays and special occasions, and continuing to communicate. Even if family members move to another place or travel, modern means of communication such as smartphones and digital applications can be used. Family members should also accept differences between them, whether in opinion or personality, and deal positively and try to reach compromises for any conflicts or problems that may occur. Attention to small details can also be important in personal communication within the family, such as caring for the health and comfort of family members, identifying their interests and special needs, and maintaining contact with different generations of the family. Care should be taken to maintain contact with different generations of the family through phone calls or family visits to ensure continued communication and maintain interdependence within the family.

Regarding family communication in the state of M'Sila, it is influenced by several local factors such as traditions, cultural and social values, as well as economic and social conditions in the region. Therefore, families in the state of M'Sila, like any other community, should prioritize family communication and enhance it by introducing positive changes in their daily lifestyles as well as providing sufficient time for interaction and dialogue among family members. The government and local community should also work together to provide necessary support to promote family communication and encourage families to build strong and healthy relationships in the region (Bwambale and Mwesige,2017).

. There are several ways families can use to enhance family communication in the state of M'Sila, including:

- Allocating time for family interaction: Families can allocate specific time during the day or week for family interaction, such as sitting together for a meal or engaging in a shared activity.
- Continuous communication: Families can maintain continuous communication through phone calls or social media, even if they are far apart (Jombo and Odey,2019).
- Prioritizing dialogue: Families should prioritize open and honest dialogue, even in difficult or sensitive matters.
- Enhancing family values: Families can enhance positive family values such as respect, tolerance, patience, love, and cooperation.
- Engaging in family activities: Families can allocate time for family activities such as trips, sports or cultural activities.
- Seeking external support: In case of difficulties or challenges in family communication, families can seek external support such as couple counseling or family therapy (Miller and Perlman 2009).

Implications for personal communication in Algerian families

The Algerian family is considered an important social institution in African society, and personal communication is one of the key factors that affect relationships among individuals in Algerian families. It is worth noting that the consequences of personal communication in Algerian families can be detailed as follows: Personal communication contributes to strengthening family ties and enhancing trust among family members, thereby improving the quality of family life. Personal communication in Algerian families is a means of transmitting traditions, customs, and cultural heritage between generations, and it is also a means of promoting belonging to the family and Algerian culture. Personal communication in Algerian families can play an important role in preventing mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, as it improves social support and reduces social isolation. Personal communication in Algerian families helps to promote cooperation and understanding among family members and works to achieve a balance between individual and collective family needs. Personal communication in Algerian families can help prevent domestic violence, as individuals can communicate with

each other to obtain support and assistance in solving problems and discuss difficult issues in a positive and peaceful manner.

CONCLUSION

Personal communication within Algerian families in the state of M'Sila is considered an effective method for expressing emotions, thoughts, and communication between family members, and it helps to strengthen social relationships between them. Personal communication in Algerian families in M'Sila is usually conducted through regular family meetings, special occasions such as holidays, religious events, and family visits. Personal communication plays an important role in family cohesion and the enhancement of social bonds, as it helps to improve family relationships and effectively address family problems. It also helps to develop social and cultural relationships among individuals and enhances awareness of authentic Algerian traditions and values. To maintain these important social connections, personal communication should be encouraged and promoted within Algerian families in M'Sila, Regular family meetings should also be arranged in special occasions celebrated with the family. This requires a commitment of time and effort to interact with each other. Additionally, personal communication within Algerian families in M'Sila can be strengthened by using modern communication tools such as phone applications and social media, but it should be balanced with real personal communication. Furthermore, it is important to provide opportunities for individuals within the family to express their thoughts and feelings and to listen to them carefully. This requires building trust among family members and avoiding bias or discrimination. Although personal communication can be difficult at times, it is a fundamental basis for building healthy and strong relationships among family members and enhancing social cohesion in Algerian society as a whole.

In Algeria, policy makers and practitioners can utilize the findings of this study to design interventions and programs that enhance personal communication within families. These interventions include raising awareness and educating families about the importance of personal communication and enhancing the necessary skills to improve it, strengthening social and community support for families, improving the socioeconomic conditions of families, utilizing technology and modern communication tools, and promoting education and training on healthy family communication. These programs and interventions should be targeted towards low-income families, immigrant families, and families facing specific economic or social challenges.

LIMITATIONS

It is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, it is a qualitative study that relied on an ethnographic approach, which may not provide extensive and generalizable information. This limits the researchers' ability to generalize the findings. Additionally, the study is limited to interpreting forms of personal communication within families in the state of M'Sila and the patterns that shape this type of communication. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to a genuine understanding of family communication by immersing the researchers in the participants' experiences and observing their behaviors and interactions within the families in a deep manner to comprehend the communicative phenomenon in the society and to read the context and surrounding circumstances of certain families in M'Sila.

Declaration

We the authors declare that this review paper was conducted in the absence of any financial relationship that could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest.

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