



## THE ROLE OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION IN ADOLESCENT IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE MODERN ERA

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescents undergo a phase of identity exploration through social and family interactions. In Giwangretno Village, this process is influenced by modernization and digital media, which alter the dynamics of family communication. This study aims to explain the role of family communication and parental digital mediation in shaping adolescent identity in a modern rural environment. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving five adolescents, three parents, and two community figures. Data were analyzed using family communication theory and digital mediation theory. The findings indicate that family communication patterns in Giwangretno Village tend to be open and dialogical, allowing adolescents to express their opinions while fostering self-confidence and social responsibility. Family communication functions both as a means of instilling values and reinforcing emotional bonds. Parents implement three forms of digital mediation: restrictive, instructive, and participatory, with a dominance of the instructive pattern oriented toward education. This approach helps adolescents filter content, internalize positive values, and develop a reflective identity. The resulting adolescent identity is a hybrid of religious and modern values, harmoniously combining traditional values, religiosity, and digital modernity. **Conclusion:** Open family communication and instructive digital mediation strengthen a religious-modern adolescent identity and prevent identity crises in the digital era.

**Keyword:** family communication, digital, adolescents



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## INTRODUCTION

The adolescent period represents a critical phase in the formation of personal and social identity, during which individuals strive to understand themselves, their values, and their roles through interactions with their environment, particularly within the family. In the modern context, digital media has become a new arena for adolescents to explore and negotiate self-identity (Nasir & Ku Johari, 2024). The family continues to play a fundamental role as a source of values, norms, and communication patterns that shape adolescents' cognitive frameworks in responding to social change (Muttaqin, 2022). In recent years, the development of technology and social media has altered communication dynamics, including parent-child relationships, which are increasingly mediated online. This shift demands parental competence in implementing effective digital mediation to guide adolescent behavior and identity formation (Purboningsih, 2024). Previous studies confirm that mediation strategies—whether restrictive, participatory, or dialogical significantly influence the internalization of values and the construction of adolescent identity in the digital era (Garrett, 2025; Purboningsih, 2023).

In rural contexts such as Giwangretno Village, Sruweng District, Kebumen Regency, the dynamics of adolescent identity formation have distinctive characteristics. While access to technology and social media has expanded, social life remains influenced by strong community structures and embedded traditional values. Local traditions, extended family hierarchies, and social norms function as moral anchors for adolescents but may also create tension when modern values begin to be internalized (Syanni, 2024). Variations in rural family communication patterns from open to authoritarian have been shown to affect adolescents' emotional maturity and value orientation (Ramadhana, 2021). However, gaps remain in research, particularly in integrating analyses of traditional family communication patterns with parent-child digital communication practices and examining the interaction between local cultural values, modern cultural flows, and the influence of digital mediation on rural adolescent identity formation (Banić et al., 2024).

With the expansion of globalization and internet penetration, adolescents in rural areas like Giwangretno no longer inhabit entirely local socialization spaces. Access to digital media broadens their exposure to diverse identity models, lifestyles, and social values derived from global culture (Purboningsih, 2023). Such exposure can enrich identity choices but also trigger value conflicts between family norms and popular culture propagated by social media. In Giwangretno, differences in perceptions between adolescents and parents regarding the benefits and risks of digital media have produced variations in family communication patterns. Some parents implement strict control and technical supervision, while others prioritize open dialogue in guidance. According to the Family Communication Patterns theory by Koerner and Fitzpatrick, families with high conversation orientation tend to foster healthy adolescent identity exploration, whereas high conformity orientation emphasizes value uniformity and obedience (Gong et al., 2023).

Open family communication plays a crucial role in developing adolescents' reflective capacity toward new values obtained from external environments, including digital media. Adolescents raised in dialogical communication environments are generally more capable of filtering negative influences and asserting a balanced identity between local values and modernity (Nasir & Ku Johari, 2024). Conversely, closed communication patterns may prompt adolescents to seek identity validation outside the family, such as in online communities, which may not always align with positive values

(Devapramod, 2024). In Giwangretno Village, structural factors such as parental education levels, the roles of religious and customary leaders, and social networks also influence family communication practices and adolescent identity formation. Regarding digital mediation, Purboningsih (2023) identifies three main forms: restrictive, instructive, and coactive. The latter two have been shown to be more effective in fostering reflective identity, whereas excessive restriction can lead to resistance and covert exploration of alternative identities (Banić et al., 2024).

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the role of family communication in adolescent identity formation in the modern generation of Giwangretno Village is an important issue that warrants in-depth study. This research focuses on how family communication patterns and parental digital mediation contribute to adolescents' identity formation amid modernization and socio-cultural changes in rural areas. Additionally, the study examines how local values and social traditions in Giwangretno influence the process of constructing adolescent identity, which navigates between traditional values and digital modernity. The main objective of this study is to understand the forms of adolescent identity and the role of family communication in shaping such identity. Theoretically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for similar studies, and practically, they aim to enrich the understanding of students in the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program regarding family communication dynamics in the digital era.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of family communication in adolescent identity formation in the modern generation, specifically in Giwangretno Village, Sruweng District, Kebumen Regency. This approach was chosen because it can effectively capture the meanings, experiences, and social interactions between parents and adolescents within the socio-cultural context of a rural community. The study was conducted over four months (March–June 2025) through stages of preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing.

The research was carried out in Giwangretno Village, a community characterized by religiosity and traditional values, which is now beginning to adapt to developments in digital technology. Data were collected using in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences and perceptions of adolescents, parents, and community leaders regarding family communication and adolescent identity. Observations were conducted to understand family interaction patterns and social dynamics, while documentation included activity notes, photographs, and village administrative data.

To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation, member checking, content feasibility testing, and readability testing were employed (Sugiyono, 2020). Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman (2021) model through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These stages were carried out interactively and continuously to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between family communication patterns, parental digital mediation, and adolescent identity construction in Giwangretno Village.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Adolescent Identity in Giwangretno Village

Adolescent identity in Giwangretno Village exhibits a complex dynamic. Adolescents live in a transitional cultural context that requires them to adapt between local traditional values, religious

teachings, and the influence of modern culture. On one hand, they continue to uphold customary norms and religiosity, while on the other hand, they wish to align with the digital lifestyles they encounter through social media. Adolescents in Giwangretno Village are generally active users of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These activities influence their clothing choices, social interactions, and perceptions of the world around them. Nevertheless, the influence of family and the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) environment remains strong, prompting adolescents to balance modernity with religiosity.

Based on interviews, R1 (Putri, 17) stated that she often follows trends on social media but still chooses modest styles according to her parents' guidance. R2 (Arif, 18) revealed that he is still searching for his identity and often feels conflicted between wanting to appear trendy and maintaining his role as a good child at home. R3 (Fina, 16) added that she prefers a simple and modest style rather than following excessive trends, such as Korean fashion culture. These interviews indicate that adolescents in Giwangretno experience identity ambivalence, reflecting a tension between the desire to appear modern and the need to uphold religious and traditional values.

Adolescent identity in Giwangretno is shaped by three main factors: religious values, social values, and digital-modernity values. Religious values are reflected in activities such as youth religious study sessions, Quran recitations, and participation in Islamic holiday celebrations. Social values are evident in communal activities like gotong royong (mutual cooperation), night watch duties, and involvement in youth organizations (karang taruna). Digital-modernity values manifest through social media usage as a means of entertainment, learning, and self-expression. Local youth leader Pak Wahyu (G1) explained that although young people are increasingly familiar with technology, they are still able to filter external influences when family communication functions effectively. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that adolescent identity in Giwangretno is adaptive and reflects a religious-modern orientation: rooted in Islamic and village customs while remaining open to digital and global developments.

Adolescents in Giwangretno demonstrate a strong self-awareness of religious and social values while remaining receptive to modernity. R4 (Rima, 18) stated that she wants to be known as a polite village girl but also aims for urban-style success, prompting her to create educational content on TikTok about manners and etiquette. R5 (Andi, 18) emphasized that although many of his peers follow modern trends, he maintains his identity by actively participating in mosque activities. These statements illustrate the process of identity negotiation, in which adolescents attempt to integrate religious values with modern expression. They strive to appear confident and independent while upholding family moral values.

### **The Role of Family Communication in Adolescent Identity Formation**

Family communication patterns in Giwangretno Village generally demonstrate open and warm characteristics, although there is variation in communication styles among families. Based on interviews, most adolescents reported having positive communication relationships with their parents. Rara (17) stated that she often shares stories about school activities with her mother, while her father tends to be calmer but remains responsive when asked for advice. Nisa (18) explained that her parents' busy schedules often necessitate communication through text messages, yet there remains space for discussion when problems arise. From the parents' perspective, Rosidin (55) noted that child-rearing in contemporary times requires more dialogue rather than direct commands.

Families with open communication are more successful in building trust and emotional closeness between parents and children. Conversely, families that employ rigid or authoritarian communication

tend to create psychological distance. In the adolescent context, warm, two-way communication allows children to feel accepted and valued, making them more open to discussing personal or social issues. This openness provides a crucial foundation for positive self-identity development. Interactions based on dialogue, honesty, and mutual respect within the family environment play a vital role in shaping adolescents' thinking patterns, enabling them to adapt without losing core values taught at home.

In responding to digital influences, parents in Giwangretno Village employ various forms of mediation regarding their children's social media use. Interviews revealed three main types of digital mediation: restrictive mediation (limiting time and content), instructive mediation (discussion and guidance), and participatory mediation (engaging in digital activities together). R2 (17) shared that her mother restricts phone usage until 10 p.m., while O2 (50) emphasized the importance of dialogue to help children distinguish between positive and negative content. The head of the local youth organization (Karang Taruna) also noted that some parents have attended digital literacy training, enabling them to guide their children more prudently.

Democratic and open family communication patterns in Giwangretno foster mutual respect between children and parents. Some families provide guidance through discussion and modeling behaviors rather than authoritarian commands. However, some families still practice one-way communication, particularly those with lower parental education levels, indicating that education influences communication style. Dialogic communication creates a psychologically safe climate for adolescents to express their opinions, whereas authoritarian communication often discourages children from sharing stories or seeking solutions collaboratively. In the context of identity formation, adolescents raised in families with open communication tend to possess stronger reflective abilities and can critically assess external influences.

Open and empathetic family communication significantly impacts the formation of positive adolescent identity. Lina (35) emphasized speaking gently so her children would feel comfortable opening up, while Subur (45) highlighted the importance of modeling polite behavior directly. Community leader Ustadz Emang noted that adolescents who frequently interact with their parents tend to be more courteous and self-regulated than those who rarely communicate. Thus, family communication in Giwangretno acts as a protective factor, supporting adolescents in developing religious, confident, and resilient identities amidst modernity and digital technology.

Family communication is crucial not only for identity formation but also for adolescents' behavioral and psychological well-being. Studies indicate that families with verbal hostility increase adolescents' risk of dating violence and other externalizing behaviors. In contrast, expressiveness and openness in family communication reduce the likelihood of such negative behaviors if verbal hostility is absent (Lu et al., 2021). Furthermore, effective family communication functions as a protective factor for mental health, mitigating risks of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. It also helps adolescents cope with academic pressure, excessive smartphone use, and both traditional and cyber victimization (Deniz et al., 2024; Windarwati et al., 2022; Yang, 2025; Buelga et al., 2024).

Beyond psychological well-being, family communication quality influences other developmental aspects, such as career maturity and consumer behavior. Positive parent-adolescent communication supports a balanced time perspective essential for career development (Bi & Wang, 2023). In the realm of consumer behavior, family communication shapes adolescents' purchasing habits, with guidance-oriented communication promoting more planned buying behavior (Niu, 2017). Moreover, communication about sexual topics within families can protect adolescents from risky sexual

behaviors. However, disagreements between parents and adolescents regarding such discussions may reduce communication effectiveness (Grossman et al., 2017; Ustilaité et al., 2022).

### **Family Communication Patterns and Adolescent Identity Formation**

Family communication plays a fundamental role in the process of adolescent identity formation. Research findings indicate that the communication patterns within families in Giwangretno Village tend to be open and warm, albeit to varying degrees. In this context, parents strive to maintain a balance between granting autonomy and exerting control over their children. Communication occurs through dialogue, discussion, and the provision of persuasive advice rather than direct commands. Such communication patterns allow adolescents to express opinions, convey feelings, and learn to understand the values upheld by their families.

#### **1. Parental Digital Mediation in the Modern Era**

The development of information technology requires families to adapt in establishing communication patterns relevant to the digital age. Research indicates that parents in Giwangretno have implemented digital mediation in three primary forms: restrictive, instructive, and participatory. Restrictive mediation is carried out by limiting device usage time or regulating the types of content accessible. Instructive mediation is manifested through guidance and explanations about the positive and negative impacts of digital media. Participatory mediation occurs when parents actively engage in their children's digital activities, such as discussing content or using media together. Such communication patterns are not merely forms of supervision but also serve as guidance in moral and value education, enabling adolescents to use technology responsibly. Thus, digital mediation is not solely a control strategy but also a means of fostering digital character education, strengthening adolescents' critical thinking, information discernment, and moral-religious identity amidst globalization.

Parental digital mediation is a crucial aspect of guiding and protecting children's experiences in cyberspace. The strategy aims to maximize benefits while minimizing risks associated with children's use of digital media (Palaigeorgiou et al., 2018). In practice, active mediation including positive interaction and discussion regarding online content is increasingly recognized as an alternative or complement to restrictive mediation, which usually involves limiting content and screen time (Banić & Orehovački, 2024; Dias et al., 2016; Tartakowsky et al., 2023). Additionally, some parents employ subterfuge strategies, limiting digital access indirectly under the guise of technical issues or internet connectivity (Savadova, 2025). Parental digital literacy also plays an important role; parents with higher digital literacy tend to implement more effective mediation practices, enhancing children's online safety (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Beyond strategy and skills, parents' attitudes toward digital technology significantly influence mediation practices. Parents' perceptions of technology as either educational or merely a distraction determine their approach to guiding their children (Choy et al., 2024). Cultural and socio-economic contexts also affect how parents manage their children's digital use (Wilson et al., 2025; Alhajji et al., 2025). Effective mediation not only enhances children's digital literacy but also protects them from online risks, impacting their emotional well-being and behavior; children who receive supportive mediation tend to be happier and less prone to social media addiction, whereas restrictive mediation may increase addictive tendencies (Tan et al., 2024; Rudnova et al., 2023). Therefore, programs aimed at improving parental digital literacy and mediation skills are crucial to support safe and responsible digital engagement by children (Koroleva, 2024).

## 2. Adolescent Identity Formation in a Socio-Cultural Context

Adolescent identity in Giwangretno Village is shaped through the interaction of local values, religiosity, and digital modernity. Adolescents in Giwangretno exhibit a religious-modern identity, combining religious and traditional values with openness to technological progress. Religious culture and social traditions, such as mutual cooperation, politeness, and respect for parents, remain strongly embedded in adolescents' lives. At the same time, they strive to adapt to the demands of an era emphasizing independence, self-expression, and digital creativity. Consequently, adolescent identity formation in Giwangretno is not static but a dynamic process negotiated between old and new values. Families, schools, and the broader community serve as social systems that balance the preservation of traditional values with adaptation to modernity.

Adolescent identity formation is a complex process influenced by various social and cultural factors. The Three-Factor Model provides a key framework for understanding how adolescents develop and revise their identities over time, taking into account specific cultural contexts (Crocetti, 2018). Erikson's theory emphasizes the importance of social support in identity development; adolescents with supportive social relationships tend to feel more secure and directed, reducing confusion or a sense of being "lost" during identity formation (Ja & Jose, 2017). Peer groups also play a significant role in shaping adolescents' social identities. Adolescents with peers of the same ethnicity tend to place greater importance on their ethnic identity, meaning that social interaction with peers can strengthen self-understanding and cultural value orientation (Douglass et al., 2017). Certain communities and subcultures, such as the House Ball Community (HBC), provide safe spaces for adolescents to express themselves and construct their identities positively (Telander et al., 2017).

In addition to social factors, school-based interventions have been shown to support adolescent identity development, particularly in the context of ethnic-racial identity. Such programs help adolescents understand and embrace their cultural heritage, forming clearer and more positive identities (Ceccon et al., 2024). Studies also indicate that adolescent identity formation may differ significantly across cultures. For instance, Japanese adolescents demonstrate patterns of stability and identity uncertainty that differ from Western adolescents, highlighting the role of culture in shaping identity dynamics (Sugimura, 2020). Overall, adolescent identity formation results from the interaction of individual factors, social support, peer influence, community engagement, and broader cultural context. A deep understanding of these factors can assist parents, educators, and policymakers in designing strategies that support positive adolescent identity development.

## 3. The Relationship Between Family Communication and Adolescent Identity Formation

Effective family communication has been shown to correlate positively with healthy adolescent identity formation. Families that foster open, empathetic, and supportive communication cultivate self-confidence, emotional stability, and moral responsibility in adolescents. Moreover, good communication serves as a protective factor against the negative influence of social media. When adolescents feel heard and valued by their parents, they are more likely to openly share experiences and moral dilemmas encountered online. Conversely, closed or authoritarian communication may lead to resistance, conflict, and identity crises. Therefore, family communication can be regarded as a foundational element in adolescent

identity formation, particularly in facing the challenges of modernization and digitalization, which often introduce values that may not align with local culture or religion.

Family communication plays a critical role in adolescent identity development. Research indicates that open communication between parents and adolescents is positively associated with more adaptive identity development, especially when parents support the child's autonomy (Sznitman et al., 2019). Furthermore, effective family communication can enhance adolescents' self-esteem, subsequently contributing to healthier and more stable identity formation (Mohan et al., 2022). In the context of ethnic socialization, studies of Latinx families show that intense early ethnic socialization experiences can promote adolescents' ethnic identity exploration; however, over the long term, this may delay the development of mature identity resolution (Constante et al., 2020). Moreover, overall family functioning, including communication quality, has been found to predict identity formation in late adolescence, with the communication dimension contributing significantly to identity development processes (Putri & Nurwianti, 2020). Thus, effective and supportive family communication is a key factor in promoting adolescent identity development.

## CONCLUSION

The role of family communication and parental digital mediation in adolescent identity formation in Giwangretno Village indicates that family communication plays a central role in shaping adolescents' identities. Open, warm, and dialogic communication enables adolescents to express themselves, receive moral and religious guidance, and develop self-confidence, social responsibility, and emotional stability. Furthermore, parental digital mediation represents a modern parenting adaptation, in which parents act as digital companions who guide their children in positive media use through restrictive, instructive, and participatory approaches. This ensures that children are protected from the negative impacts of media while simultaneously leveraging it for self-development.

Adolescent identity in Giwangretno Village forms dynamically through interactions among local values, religiosity, and digital modernity, resulting in a distinctive hybrid religious-modern identity. Family communication also serves as a protective mechanism against identity crises, as empathetic and open families provide a safe space for adolescents to navigate social pressures, value conflicts, and global information flows. Based on these findings, it is recommended that parents enhance the quality of communication through dialogic approaches, actively engage in digital mediation, and model positive technology use. Meanwhile, adolescents are encouraged to develop critical and selective thinking in their media use, maintain a balance between religious values and modernity demands, and utilize social media as a platform for personal development and creative outreach. In this way, the synergy of family communication and digital mediation can foster the formation of adaptive, morally grounded, and productive adolescent identities in the digital era.

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