

**FAMILY COMMUNICATION AND WOMEN'S CREATIVE
EMPOWERMENT IN YEHCANI VILLAGE, ABIANSEMAL BADUNG**

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ABSTRACT

Family communication is a fundamental relational process that shapes emotional well-being, social learning, and individual creativity within households. This study explores how family communication contributes to women's creative empowerment in Yeh Cani Village, Abiansemal, Badung. Previous research has emphasized mothers' roles in maintaining family harmony; however, little attention has been given to how broader communication patterns within traditional communities foster women's creativity. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design guided by Family Communication Patterns Theory and Symbolic Interactionism. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving eight women (aged 25–55) engaged in creative and productive activities. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) interactive model. To ensure trustworthiness, member checking and triangulation of sources were conducted following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative rigor. Findings reveal that open, dialogic communication fosters emotional support, collaboration, and creative initiative among women, whereas hierarchical, gendered communication limits self-expression. Women employ adaptive communication strategies, such as subtle persuasion and strategic timing grounded in Balinese values (*rwa bhineda*, *tri hita karana*) to maintain harmony while asserting creative agency. Nonverbal and emotional support (e.g. shared domestic labor and encouragement) emerge as a vital dimension of family interaction that reinforces empowerment. This study concludes that family communication in Balinese society operates as both a cultural system and a relational mechanism for empowerment. Open dialogue and empathetic interaction transform traditional family structures into spaces of creativity, equality, and resilience. By extending established communication theories into a Southeast Asian context, the findings contribute to theoretical understanding of family-based empowerment. Practically, they suggest that community-based gender programs should foster dialogic family communication (through empathy training, participatory dialogue, etc.) in alignment with Balinese local wisdom.

Keywords: Communication patterns, Creativity, Empowerment, Family communication, Women

INTRODUCTION

Family communication is a fundamental dimension of human interaction that shapes emotional well-being, social learning, and the development of individual creativity within the household. Through daily exchanges, family members construct

meaning, transmit cultural values, and negotiate relational roles and expectations. In many traditional societies, including Bali, the family functions not merely as a domestic unit but as a microcosm of cultural and social life in which identity, creativity, and collective participation are continuously constructed and redefined. Understanding how family communication influences women's creativity is therefore critical in contexts where gender roles and cultural norms intersect.

This study builds on previous research entitled "The Role of Mothers in Building Effective Communication within the Family in Abiansema Dauh Yeh Cani Village," which examined how mothers sustain interpersonal communication and harmony. While that study emphasized the maternal role as the communicative nucleus of family life, the present research broadens the perspective to consider the family as a whole and its cultural system. By shifting from a micro-level focus on mothers to a macro-level understanding of family communication processes, we explore how interaction patterns foster women's creative expression and empowerment in a traditional Balinese setting. In doing so, this research fills a gap in the literature by applying communication theories to women's empowerment in a non-Western, collectivist context extending existing models of family communication into new cultural terrain.

We draw on Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) as the guiding frameworks. Family Communication Patterns Theory distinguishes conversation orientation (encouraging open dialogue and collaboration) from conformity orientation (emphasizing hierarchy and uniformity). Conversation-oriented families nurture self-efficacy and creativity, whereas conformity oriented families may suppress individuality. Symbolic Interactionism posits that family communication is a symbolic process through which individuals construct meanings about their roles and identities. For women in particular, communication with family members is a key site where personal and cultural meanings of creativity are negotiated. In empathetic and validating environments, women's confidence and creative autonomy are reinforced; conversely, hierarchical or dismissive communication can constrain their agency.

From a gendered communication perspective, family interaction patterns reflect broader societal hierarchies. In patriarchal structures, communicative authority often resides with men, confining women's voices to supportive domains (Tannen, 1994; Mulawarman, 2020). Yet, women are not passive recipients of these norms. They employ adaptive strategies, persuasive discourse, emotional intelligence, and symbolic negotiation, to navigate power asymmetries while preserving harmony. In the Balinese cultural context, where principles of *rwa bhineda* (balance) and *tri hita karana* (harmony among humans, nature, and the divine) are deeply embedded, women use communication to both uphold social cohesion and assert creative agency.

Despite extensive scholarship on family communication and gender roles, a significant gap remains concerning how communication serves as a space for women's creativity and empowerment in traditional settings. Prior studies have largely emphasized communication in relation to cohesion, parenting, or family well-being, with limited attention to its creative and empowering dimensions. For instance, few studies have applied Family Communication Patterns Theory or Symbolic Interactionism to analyze women's creative empowerment in non-Western cultures. Accordingly, this study investigates how family communication in Yeh Cani Village (Abiansema, Badung) shapes women's creative expression and empowerment. It

examines how both verbal and nonverbal communication practices facilitate or hinder creative engagement, and how women negotiate autonomy and identity within traditional family structures.

In summary, this study makes two main contributions. Theoretically, it extends existing family communication and interactionist frameworks to a Southeast Asian context, demonstrating that these models can account for empowerment outcomes in collectivist cultures. It shows that family communication functions not only as a mechanism of social regulation but also as a platform for women's empowerment and creativity. Practically, the study offers empirically grounded insights for gender empowerment initiatives: by situating communication within the framework of Balinese cultural values, it underscores the potential of family dialogue and empathy to catalyze gender equality, creativity, and social development in local communities.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the role of family communication in shaping women's creative expression and empowerment within Yeh Cani Village, Abiansema, Badung Regency. A qualitative design was chosen because it allows researchers to examine communication as a lived, contextual process rather than as a predetermined variable. Recent scholarship affirms that qualitative inquiry is particularly effective for capturing symbolic meanings and interpersonal dynamics in family and gender studies (Pakuna, 2024; Zamralita et al., 2024).

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive–qualitative design that enables systematic exploration of participants' subjective experiences and meaning-making processes. This design provides a framework to describe, explain, and interpret how communicative interactions within families foster or constrain women's creativity. Consistent with Bakhtiari et al. (2024) and Okur et al. (2025), qualitative inquiry in family communication research allows for deep insight into relational and emotional dimensions that quantitative methods often overlook. The research was guided by two theoretical frameworks: Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969). These frameworks were applied to identify communicative orientations, interpret symbolic meanings, and explain how family discourse patterns influence creative engagement among women.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in Yeh Cani Village, Abiansema District, Badung Regency, Bali a community characterized by strong traditional values, extended family structures, and active female participation in creative practices. The setting was selected purposively, reflecting the recommendation of Pakuna (2024) that rural, tradition rich contexts provide valuable insights into empowerment processes. Participants consisted of eight women aged 25–55 years, each involved in creative activities such as handicrafts, culinary arts, or small-scale entrepreneurship. They were recruited through purposive sampling based on three inclusion criteria:

- Active involvement in creative or productive work;
- Experience with family communication related to that activity; and

- Willingness to participate and share experiences openly. This sample size was deemed sufficient following the principle of data saturation, wherein data collection continues until no new conceptual categories emerge.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews; participant observation during creative activities; and review of relevant documents (e.g. photographs, social media posts of creative work). Interviews explored participants' experiences of family support, communication patterns, and creative projects. Observations captured family interactions and nonverbal dynamics. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with participants' consent.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising three interrelated phases:

1. **Data Reduction:** coding and categorizing textual and observational data based on emerging themes such as communication orientation, gendered negotiation, and creative engagement.
2. **Data Display:** visualizing patterns and relationships through thematic matrices and conceptual mapping.
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** developing interpretive meanings from the data and validating them through iterative reflection, member checking (returning interpretations to participants), and peer debriefing.

This model was selected because it allows flexibility, reflexivity, and transparency in handling complex qualitative data, practices aligned with best practice in recent family communication research (Okur et al., 2025).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative rigor were applied. Member checking was conducted by sharing emerging interpretations with participants for feedback. Triangulation of multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) was used to cross-validate themes. Maintaining field notes and an audit trail of data decisions further enhanced the credibility and dependability of the analysis. These procedures helped confirm that the findings accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

FINDINGS

The analysis revealed four major themes illustrating how family communication shapes women's creative empowerment in Yeh Cani Village: (1) supportive and dialogic family communication, (2) gendered communicative constraints, (3) adaptive communication strategies, and (4) nonverbal and emotional support. Together, these findings show that communication within Balinese families can be both empowering and constraining for women's creativity.

Supportive and Dialogic Family Communication

Open, empathetic, and dialogic communication within families emerged as the primary catalyst for women's creativity. Participants consistently described that encouragement, attentive listening, and collaborative discussion from family members fostered both emotional security and creative motivation. For example, one participant noted:

“When my husband listens to my ideas and helps me post them on social media, I feel that my work is appreciated and meaningful. It becomes something we do together.” (Participant N, 43).

Such interactions demonstrate that a conversation-oriented communication style enables women to perceive creativity as a shared family endeavor rather than an individual pursuit. Families that promote mutual respect and idea-sharing were observed to exhibit higher levels of cooperative engagement in creative activities. These findings reflect Koerner and Fitzpatrick’s (2002) concept of conversation orientation, emphasizing openness, validation, and reciprocal understanding. In this context, communication functions not merely as verbal exchange but as a symbolic space that nurtures self-confidence and transforms family relationships into creative collaborations.

Gendered Communicative Constraints

By contrast, several participants encountered communicative barriers rooted in traditional gender hierarchies. In families where authority resides predominantly with the male head of household, women’s ideas were often disregarded or devalued. As one participant shared,

“Sometimes I keep my ideas to myself because my husband thinks creativity is not necessary for women. He wants me to focus on house chores.” (Participant L, 37).

This dynamic reflects a conformity orientation of communication, where obedience and uniformity take precedence over dialogue. Such hierarchical structures inhibit women’s agency, limiting their capacity to initiate creative projects or make independent decisions. Observation notes supported these accounts: in male-dominant families, decision-making tended to be unidirectional, and discussions about creative activities were seldom initiated by women. This theme underscores how power asymmetries in communication patterns can restrict women’s participation, thereby reinforcing patriarchal norms and emotional withdrawal. However, it also highlights that women do not passively accept these constraints; rather, they find ways to persist and adapt within them.

Adaptive Communication Strategies

Despite the prevalence of hierarchical dynamics, the women in Yeh Cani demonstrated adaptive and culturally embedded communication strategies that enabled them to assert creativity while maintaining family harmony. These strategies often involved subtle persuasion, indirect suggestion, and careful timing of discussions. For instance, one participant explained:

“I never confront directly. I choose a calm moment to speak, usually after prayers, so my husband listens more openly.” (Participant S, 45).

This adaptive communication reflects what can be called cultural communicative intelligence. Grounded in Balinese values of *rwa bhineda* (balance) and *tri hita karana* (harmony among people, nature, and divinity), women’s ability to negotiate between conformity and autonomy demonstrates that communication in Yeh Cani functions as both a relational practice and a cultural negotiation. Rather than opposing authority directly, women strategically accommodate it, transforming communication into a tool for quiet resistance and gradual empowerment. This finding aligns with feminist discourse theories suggesting that women’s linguistic strategies often prioritize relational harmony while subtly resisting dominance (Tannen, 1994;

Mulawarman, 2020). In essence, creativity in these families is not purely individualistic but relational and symbolic it emerges from negotiation within established cultural scripts.

Nonverbal and Emotional Support

Beyond verbal interactions, the findings reveal that nonverbal communication and emotional support are central to sustaining women's creativity. Family members' actions such as assisting with domestic responsibilities or providing material and emotional support, serve as implicit communicative acts that validate women's creative pursuits. As one respondent noted,

"My husband doesn't always say much, but when he helps with the children while I work on my orders, that means a lot to me." (Participant M, 31).

Such gestures convey trust, solidarity, and partnership, which collectively enhance women's motivation to continue their creative engagement. This reflects the concept of symbolic support, where behavior carries communicative meaning and reinforces psychological security. Consistent with research by Lebuda et al. (2020), this finding confirms that creativity is nurtured in environments where emotional and instrumental support coexist, transforming communication from a purely verbal act into a relational and embodied practice. In Yeh Cani, communication is thus embodied; it transcends words and becomes enacted through gestures, cooperation, and shared experiences that symbolically affirm belonging and validation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that family communication operates as a cultural and relational process through which women negotiate creativity, agency, and empowerment within domestic and community contexts. Far from being static or purely hierarchical, family communication in Yeh Cani Village represents a dynamic, meaning-making practice shaped by dialogue, empathy, and cultural norms. The four thematic findings, supportive communication, gendered constraints, adaptive strategies, and nonverbal reinforcement, collectively reveal that communication within the Balinese family is both a source of empowerment and a site of negotiation.

Dialogic Communication as a Foundation of Empowerment

Open, dialogic, and emotionally supportive communication fosters women's creative participation and self-confidence. This finding corroborates the conversation orientation concept within Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), which posits that high-conversation families encourage exchange of ideas, individual voice, and mutual decision-making. In Yeh Cani, families engaged in frequent dialogue provided psychological safety and motivation for women to express creativity without fear of judgment. These results echo research indicating that family environments characterized by openness and trust foster creativity and self-expression (Shahsavari et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021). The present study extends this knowledge by situating it within a non-Western, collectivist context, revealing that dialogic communication not only strengthens emotional intimacy but also operates as a collective creative mechanism. Through conversation, family members collaboratively co-create meaning, transforming creativity into a shared familial endeavor rather than an individual act.

Gendered Constraints and Power Asymmetries in Family Interaction

Hierarchical and gender-biased communication patterns can constrain women's participation in creative decision-making. This aligns with the conformity orientation of Koerner and Fitzpatrick's model, where authority and obedience dominate over conversation and autonomy. The study's findings reaffirm earlier observations that patriarchal family structures in Indonesia reinforce communicative inequalities that marginalize women's voices (Mulawarman, 2020). However, our results provide additional insight by showing that women's silence or indirectness is not necessarily submission but can be a strategic communicative adaptation. Within the Balinese cultural context, where harmony (*tri hita karana*) is deeply valued, overt confrontation is often discouraged. Consequently, women adopt subtle communicative forms such as symbolic persuasion and timing to maintain balance while still asserting agency. This finding resonates with Tannen's (1994) theory of gendered discourse, which emphasizes that women's linguistic strategies often prioritize relational harmony while subtly resisting dominance. In this sense, communication within Balinese families functions simultaneously as a mechanism of control and a medium of resistance. Women in Yeh Cani use culturally appropriate communicative cues to negotiate autonomy, thereby transforming familial discourse into an arena of quiet empowerment.

Adaptive and Culturally Embedded Communication Strategies

Women in Yeh Cani engage in context-sensitive communicative strategies to sustain both harmony and creativity. These strategies persuasion, indirect suggestion, and symbolic negotiation embody what we term cultural communicative intelligence. Rather than directly opposing authority, women navigate it through relational awareness and emotional tact. This finding contributes to the intersection of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and gender communication studies. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that meaning is co-constructed through everyday social interaction; in this case, Balinese women reinterpret cultural symbols of obedience and devotion as opportunities to express creativity.

Through communicative adaptation, they redefine traditional roles without overtly rejecting them. The study thus suggests that creativity in Balinese families emerges from negotiation within established cultural scripts, rather than solely from individualistic impulses. This contributes to the discourse on gendered communication in collectivist societies, expanding global understanding of how culture, gender, and communication intersect to shape agency.

Nonverbal Support as Emotional and Symbolic Communication

Nonverbal and emotional support emerged as central to the communicative ecology of creativity. Acts such as assisting with domestic responsibilities, offering time, or providing quiet companionship function as nonverbal affirmations of trust and respect. These behaviors align with Goleman's (1995) framework of emotional intelligence, which emphasizes empathy, care, and attunement as core dimensions of effective interpersonal interaction. The study extends this concept by demonstrating that emotional labor within families carries communicative meaning it signifies shared purpose and collective investment in creative outcomes. Consistent with Lebuda et al. (2020), emotional and instrumental support from family members enhances motivation and sustains creative engagement. In Yeh Cani, communication thus

transcends words and is enacted through embodied practices (gestures, cooperation, shared experiences) that symbolically affirm belonging and validation.

Integrative Interpretation

Across all themes, a key insight emerges: family communication in Yeh Cani operates as a transformative space where culture, gender, and creativity intersect. Communication is not merely a function of relational exchange but a cultural performance through which women construct meaning, negotiate boundaries, and articulate agency. This interpretation aligns with feminist communication perspectives that view the family as both a communicative and ideological structure. By embedding dialogue, empathy, and adaptive negotiation within family life, women gradually reshape the meaning of creativity and gender roles without dismantling cultural norms. In doing so, they embody what can be termed communicative empowerment, the ability to transform relational dynamics through interaction rather than confrontation.

These results have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study contributes to understanding how established communication models operate in a Balinese context; it provides empirical evidence that family communication is not only instrumental to creativity but also constitutive of empowerment. Practically, the findings suggest that community development programs in similar cultural contexts should enhance dialogic family communication as a foundation for women's empowerment and creativity. Encouraging reflective dialogue, emotional literacy, and participatory decision-making in families could transform them into sustainable spaces of innovation and equality.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that family communication constitutes a vital mechanism through which women's creativity, agency, and empowerment are negotiated within the socio-cultural context of Yeh Cani Village, Badung Regency. Rather than functioning solely as a static or hierarchical structure, family communication in this setting emerges as a dynamic, symbolic, and meaning-making process that reflects the interaction between tradition, gender, and creativity. The findings underscore that open and dialogic communication patterns characterized by empathy, validation, and participation, serve as primary enablers of women's creative expression. Conversely, hierarchical and gender-biased communication constrains innovation and can silence women's voices. Importantly, women in Yeh Cani demonstrate remarkable communicative agency: they employ adaptive strategies and symbolic negotiation to assert creativity within the boundaries of cultural norms. These practices transform communication from a medium of conformity into a platform of empowerment, suggesting that creativity in traditional societies can flourish through dialogue and cultural sensitivity rather than confrontation.

A key contribution of this research lies in its integrative and context-sensitive approach. By combining Family Communication Patterns Theory and Symbolic Interactionism within a Southeast Asian framework, the study extends the theoretical reach of family communication research beyond Western contexts. It highlights communication as both a cultural and relational system, one capable of reproducing tradition while simultaneously enabling transformation. In practical terms, the findings offer guidance for empowerment initiatives: community programs led by local governments or women's organizations might incorporate workshops on interpersonal communication, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving, aligned with Balinese

principles such as *tri hita karana*. Such initiatives could transform family systems into sustainable ecosystems of creativity, equality, and social development.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges several limitations. As a qualitative inquiry focused on a single village, the findings are context-bound and not intended for broad generalization. The small participant pool, while providing depth, limits representativeness across different socio-economic or regional backgrounds. Future research could employ comparative or mixed-method designs to examine family communication and creativity across diverse cultural settings, or include the perspectives of male family members to enrich understanding of gendered communicative dynamics.

In conclusion, this study reaffirms that communication within the Balinese family is not only the medium through which relationships are sustained but also the substance through which empowerment and creativity are realized. In a cultural context where harmony and interdependence are core values, family communication serves as both a stabilizing force and a transformative agent. By cultivating openness, empathy, and shared meaning, families can evolve into creative ecosystems that empower women, strengthen cultural continuity, and contribute to broader social resilience.

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