

# *The Influence Of Family Communication On The Independence And Decision-Making Of The Youngest Child Among 12<sup>th</sup>-Grade Students At SMA Xaverius Bandar Lampung*

Gabriele Michaela Nicatama Putri<sup>1</sup>, M. Denu Poyo<sup>2</sup>, Noning Verawati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences

Bandar Lampung University

Bandar Lampung City, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Gabriele Michaela Nicatama Putri. E-mail: [gabmichaella@gmail.com](mailto:gabmichaella@gmail.com)



**Abstract—** This study aims to analyze the influence of family communication on the independence and decision-making of the youngest child among 12th-grade students at SMA Xaverius Bandar Lampung. The youngest child often treated differently within the family structure, which can influence their ability to develop autonomy and make responsible decisions. Family communication plays a crucial role in shaping a child's confidence, behavior, and mental readiness in facing various life situations. This study adopts a quantitative research approach with a survey method. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 58 12th-grade students who are the youngest children in their families. The data were analyzed using multivariate regression to examine the relationship between family communication, independence, and decision-making. The analysis revealed that family communication has a significant effect on both variables. For the independence variable, the t-value was 5,827 with a significance level of 0,000, indicating a statistically significant relationship. Similarly, for the decision-making variable, the t-value was 7,673 with significance of 0,000, confirming a strong influence. Furthermore, simultaneous testing using Wilk's Lambda resulted in a value of 0,467 with a significance level of 0,000, demonstrating that family communication significantly affects both independence and decision-making together. Based on these findings, the study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between effective family communication and the development of independence and decision-making abilities in the youngest child.

**Keywords—**Communication, Decision-making, Family, Independence, Youngest child

## I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process of conveying messages between individuals, accompanied by a response from the message recipient (Hardjana, 2016). Within the family, communication plays a vital role in shaping each member's personality, attitudes, and behavior (Clara & Wardani, 2020). Open, honest, and affectionate communication fosters emotional closeness, conflict resolution, and the internalization of life values (Yulianti et al., 2023). A harmonious relationship between parents and children can be built through effective two-way communication, where the child feels valued and heard, while parents gain a better understanding of the child's perspective. As the youngest member of the family, the youngest child requires a communication pattern that supports the development of independence and self-confidence. However, special treatment that often places them in a passive role in decision-making can hinder their ability to face challenges independently (Untariana & Sugito, 2022).

The stereotype that youngest children tend to be spoiled and less independent stems from Alfred Adler's view that they often become the center of attention and are more pampered because they do not experience role shifts within the family (Combs-

Draughn, 2016). Permissive parenting styles and assistance from older siblings can make the youngest child more dependent on others, although some do grow into innovative and adaptable individuals when facing challenges. Independence, which includes the ability to think, act, and make decisions without relying on others, is a crucial aspect of a child's development (Purbasari & Nawangsari, 2016), and is greatly influenced by parenting styles and family communication. Studies have shown that firstborns tend to be more independent than youngest children (Putri et al., 2022), while youngest children often exhibit lower levels of independence (Zola et al., 2017). These findings highlight that birth order plays a role in shaping independence, and youngest children still require encouragement and support to develop self-confidence and decision-making abilities.

Decision-making ability is a crucial skill for late adolescents who are facing various important life choices, such as selecting a college major, which requires complex thinking and self-control (Tervo-Clemmens et al., 2022). One of the factors influencing this ability is family communication, where an open communication pattern encourages the youngest child to become more independent, while a closed pattern may hinder this development. At the age of 17–18, brain maturation also enhances social and emotional sensitivity, supporting more mature decision-making processes (Dumontheil, 2016). This process aligns with Erikson's psychosocial theory, which emphasizes the importance of developmental stages in building trust, independence, and self-identity from early childhood.

Table 1. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development

Stage	Age	Description
Trust vs Mistrust	0 - 18 months	The individual learns to trust their caregiver.
Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt	18 months - 3 years	The individual begins to develop autonomy and independence.
Initiative vs Guilt	3 - 5 years	The individual starts to take initiative and control what happens during play.
Industry vs Inferiority	5 - 12 years	The individual begins to feel proud of their achievements and successes.
Identity vs Role Confusion	12 - 18 years	The individual searches for and explores their identity.
Intimacy vs Isolation	18 - 40 years	The individual builds long-term relationships with others.
Generativity vs Stagnation	40 - 65 years	The individual feels the need to contribute to society.
Ego Integrity vs Despair	65 years and above	The individual reflects on their life journey and its meaning.

Xaverius Senior High School Bandar Lampung is a Catholic institution that emphasizes character education through discipline, independence, and moral values. The school envisions becoming an excellent and transformative educational institution, with a mission focused on academic quality, the strengthening of social values rooted in Catholic faith, and adaptability to societal changes. This commitment is embodied in its motto, HK3P: Humanity, Intelligence, Honesty, Discipline, and Service, which guides the development of resilient and responsible students. One concrete form of character education is the annual "Live In" program, where students live with rural communities to learn empathy, independence, and adaptability in a different social environment. Youngest children enrolled at SMA Xaverius also participate in this program, contributing to their personal growth, which forms the basis for this study examining how family communication influences the development of independence and decision-making abilities among 12th-grade youngest children at Xaverius Senior High School Bandar Lampung.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey technique to assess the relationship between variables such as family communication, independence, and decision-making among youngest children. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using statistical techniques to obtain objective and reliable results. This approach allows for the visualization of patterns among variables and provides a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon being studied. The strength of the survey method lies in its flexibility to reach a wide range of respondents and its time efficiency, provided that the instruments used are valid and easy to understand.

The population is a group of subjects with specific characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied comprehensively (Sugiyono, 2018). In this study, the population consists of 58 twelfth-grade students who are the youngest children in their families at SMA Xaverius Bandar Lampung, with a focus on their independence and decision-making. The study uses a total sampling technique, where all members of the population are included as the sample due to the relatively small number. This method was chosen to improve data accuracy, avoid bias, and ensure that all variations within the population are fully represented. Data analysis in this study is carried out through a series of statistical tests, such as questionnaire validity and reliability tests, normality test, heteroscedasticity test, t-test, and multivariate regression test.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To obtain a detailed understanding of the respondents' background, this study categorized the data based on class origin and gender to explore factors that may influence their perceptions and experiences regarding family communication, independence, and decision-making. This information was collected directly through questionnaires completed by all respondents and served as the basis for a more accurate interpretation of the research findings. SMA Xaverius Bandar Lampung has several parallel classes at the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade level, each consisting of approximately 30 students, bringing the total to 225 students. The researcher then collected data to identify the number of students who are the youngest child in their family. This data is crucial for further analysis in examining the relationship between birth order and levels of independence and decision-making.

A total of 58 respondents were involved in this study, consisting of 33 females (56.9%) and 25 males (43.1%). This data indicates that the respondents were predominantly female. Based on class origin, the respondents came from seven different classes, with the highest distribution from class XII 7, totaling 11 individuals (19%). This indicates that class XII 7 contributed the highest number of respondents in this study.

The indicators in this study are divided into three main categories. First, the indicators of family communication, as proposed by Warouw (2015), include the level of attention to messages, the frequency of conversations, and the understanding of message content. Second, the indicators of youngest children's independence, based on Diana et al., (2020), consist of not depending on others, the ability to act on their own initiative, and having a sense of responsibility. Third, the indicators of decision-making in youngest children, according to Lestari (2019), include the ability to identify options, understand the consequences of each choice, and make decisions that are appropriate for themselves.

### 3.1 T-test

The t-test, also known as the partial test, is used to determine whether each independent variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable individually (Sugiyono, 2018). This test enables researchers to analyze the role of each independent variable more thoroughly, without the influence of other variables. Consequently, researchers can identify which variable contributes the most to changes in the dependent variable and statistically measure the strength of that influence.

Table 2. Result of the t-test for variable X on Y1

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	24.923	5.495		4.535	.000
Family Communication	.568	.097	.614	5.827	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Independence

The analysis results in Table 2 show a t-value of 5.827 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that family communication has a significant influence on the independence of the youngest child, as this value is greater than the t-table value (2.004) and the significance level is below 0.05. This finding confirms that the quality of communication within the family plays an important role in shaping a child's independence, especially that of the youngest child. Effective communication is characterized by attentiveness to messages, consistent communication frequency, and clear understanding among family members. When a child feels noticed and heard, they will develop self-confidence that supports their ability to act independently. In such situations, the youngest child not only feels appreciated but is also encouraged to complete tasks without relying on others.

In addition, a high frequency of communication allows children to become accustomed to interacting, expressing opinions, and participating in family discussions, which promotes the development of independence. The youngest child who is actively involved in family communication will be more prepared to think critically and take initiative. Good understanding among family members also creates a harmonious atmosphere that minimizes conflict while strengthening emotional support and clarity in message delivery. A child who feels understood and emotionally supported will find it easier to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Therefore, quality family communication serves as a crucial foundation in shaping the independence and sense of responsibility of the youngest child.

Table 3. Result of the t-test for variable X on Y2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	22.902	4.668		4.906	.000
Family Communication	.635	.083	.716	7.673	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Decision-making

The analysis results in Table 3 show a t-value of 7.673 with a significance level of 0.000, which is greater than the t-table value (2.004) and less than 0.05. This indicates that family communication has a significant influence on the decision-making of the youngest child. Healthy communication within the family can shape a child's ability to think critically and choose appropriate actions. When children feel heard and valued, they tend to be more confident in evaluating various available options. An open communication environment provides space for children to learn how to carefully consider their decisions before taking action.

Attention, frequency, and understanding in communication are essential elements in developing a reflective mindset in the youngest child. A child who feels that their opinions are valued will be more open to discussion and less likely to make hasty decisions. Regular interactions, including informal daily conversations, serve as a learning medium for expressing opinions, understanding arguments, and accepting feedback. Mutual understanding of messages among family members also enhances the child's ability to grasp values, directions, and weigh the consequences of a decision. Through effective family communication, the youngest child can grow into an independent, logical individual who is capable of making wise decisions.

### 3.2 Multivariate Test

According to Hilayany (2015), multivariate analysis is used to examine data involving multiple independent and dependent variables. Multivariate regression allows for the analysis of several dependent variables within a single model, providing a more comprehensive understanding. This technique is particularly useful in research that explores complex phenomena with interrelated aspects. To ensure valid and accurate results, the application of multivariate regression requires the fulfillment of several key assumptions.

Table 4. Results of the multivariate regression test

	Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.347	14.603 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.653	14.603 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.531	14.603 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.531	14.603 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
X	Pillai's Trace	.533	31.412 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.467	31.412 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	1.142	31.412 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	1.142	31.412 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	55.000	.000

a. Design: Intercept + X

b. Exact statistic

Wilk's Lambda is a test statistic commonly used in multivariate analysis, such as MANOVA and multivariate regression. This statistic serves to examine whether the independent variables simultaneously have a significant effect on the dependent variables. The value of Wilk's Lambda indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variables that is not explained by the model. The closer the Wilk's Lambda value is to zero, the better the model is at explaining the overall variance in the dependent variables.

Based on the SPSS 25 output in Table 4, the Wilks' Lambda value was 0.467 with a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and the Wilks' Lambda is also less than 1. This indicates that family communication (X) simultaneously has a significant effect on both independence (Y1) and decision-making (Y2) in the youngest child. The better the quality of communication within the family, the higher the level of independence and decision-making ability of the youngest child. These findings reinforce that effective family communication serves as a crucial foundation for shaping the character and life skills of the youngest child.

Family communication in this study was measured through three indicators: attention to messages, frequency of conversations, and understanding of message content. High levels of attention in communication encourage children to feel valued and supported, thereby fostering self-confidence in acting independently and making decisions. Adequate conversation frequency provides space for children to practice expressing opinions, understanding different perspectives, and considering the

consequences of their choices. Meanwhile, understanding message content enables children to absorb values, recognize consequences, and act with sound reasoning. Overall, open, consistent, and mutual understanding in family communication plays a crucial role in shaping the youngest child into an independent, critical, and responsible individual.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study demonstrates that family communication has a significant influence on the independence and decision-making abilities of the youngest child. The *t*-test result for the independence variable shows a *t count* of 5.827 with a significance level of 0.000, which is greater than the *t table* value of 2.004. For the decision-making variable, the *t count* is 7.673 with a significance level of 0.000, also indicating a significant effect. Simultaneously, the multivariate test produced a Wilk's Lambda value of 0.467 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that family communication affects both variables together. This proves that the better the communication established within the family, the higher the level of independence and decision-making ability of the youngest child.

The results of this study highlight the importance of family communication in shaping the independence and decision-making abilities of the youngest child. Therefore, parents are encouraged to establish open, empathetic, and supportive communication so that children feel valued and are able to think independently. In addition, providing opportunities for children to express their opinions and solve problems on their own can also foster the development of their independence. Educational institutions and school counselors are also expected to actively educate parents through activities such as seminars and guidance sessions. Future research is recommended to include other variables such as parenting styles and sibling relationships in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the development of the youngest child.

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