

Dealing the Crisis Together: The Meaning of Family Support for Employees Infected by Covid-19

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Abstract: During the COVID-19 pandemic, family support is needed especially for those who are infected by Covid-19. This study aimed to comprehend the meaning of family support for employees infected with COVID-19. The study used qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Online and offline interviews were conducted to collect the data. This research had three main informants who work at Company X and each informant was followed by one significant other. The result showed that although the support of each family was different, the meanings that appeared in the three informants had similarities. The three informants interpreted family support as a motivation to come back home and to be healthy again. In addition, all informants interpreted family support as a stress reliever during isolation. In all informant's views, their family had provided support for them, although in different ways for each informant. Therefore, the main factor influencing the recovery of the informants was family support and only family who always stay and accept their situation. In the end, family support is also interpreted as a spirit when informants face discrimination in their workplace. From the experience of all informants, it is known that family support makes a huge contribution to the recovery process when informants were infected by COVID-19.

Keywords: Covid-19, Employee, Family Support

Abstrak: Saat pandemi seperti ini dukungan keluarga sangat dibutuhkan, terlebih bagi mereka yang sedang terinfeksi COVID-19. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dan mengetahui makna dari dukungan keluarga bagi karyawan yang terinfeksi virus COVID-19. Informan dalam penelitian kali ini adalah tiga karyawan yang positif terpapar COVID-19. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi dengan menggunakan teknik wawancara secara *online* dan *offline*. Penelitian ini memiliki tiga informan utama yang bekerja di Perusahaan X dan masing-masing informan diikuti oleh *significant other*. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa meskipun dalam bentuk perlakuan setiap keluarga berbeda, namun makna yang muncul pada ketiga informan memiliki kesamaan. Ketiga informan memaknai dukungan keluarga sebagai motivasi untuk kembali pulang dengan sehat kembali. Selain itu, informan memaknai dukungan keluarga sebagai penghilang stress saat isolasi. Bagi semua informan, keluarga akan selalu memberikan dukungan kepada mereka meskipun dengan cara yang berbeda-beda untuk setiap informan. Oleh karenanya, faktor utama yang mempengaruhi kesembuhan informan adalah dukungan keluarga. Hanya keluarga yang selalu bertahan dan menerima keadaannya. Pada akhirnya, dukungan keluarga juga dimaknai sebagai semangat menghadapi diskriminasi yang diterima informan di tempat kerja. Dari pengalaman seluruh informan diketahui bahwa dukungan keluarga memberikan kontribusi yang sangat besar dalam menjalani proses pemulihan ketika orang terinfeksi covid-19.

Kata kunci: Covid-19, Dukungan Keluarga, Karyawan

In March 2020, WHO declared that the COVID-19 pandemic is a global epidemic that has infected many countries, with a total of approximately 120,000 cases (WHO, 2020). According to Indonesian Dictionary (2020), a pandemic is a disease that is widespread in an area, continent, or even throughout the world. Transmission of the Covid-19 virus usually occurs through droplets, namely through saliva splashes or in contact with the virus and the virus can enter the open layers of the skin in a person (WHO, 2020). An experiment to calculate the rate of spread of time to cause symptoms or symptoms, the comparison between time and symptoms with isolated patients. The most common signs and symptoms of patients are fever and cough (Zheng, 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Guan et al., 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes in various sectors, such as health, economy, tourism, education, and others (Fahrika & Roy, 2020; Sugihamretha, 2020; Anjani, 2020). COVID-19 also had a direct impact on large companies or small companies by laying off workers, reducing labor, and disrupting employment opportunities, which caused many people to lose their jobs (Estrada, Koutrunas, Lee, 2021; Sansa, 2020; Nurhidayati & Anam, 2020;

Sugihamretha, 2020). The Ministry of Finance (2020) noted that there were at least eight main impacts of the pandemic on Indonesian economy. One of them was the spread of layoffs in which at least more than 1.5 million workers were laid off and affected by layoffs.

Some companies take the policy of "laying off" employees for various reasons. Particularly when the Emergency Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) are implemented in various regions. Some non-essential and non-critical business sectors were prohibited from operating in the office and this has an impact on employees (Anjani, 2020). However, there are suggestions from experts that if an employee is found to be infected with Covid-19, then the employee should self-isolate or be treated in a hospital (Purnamasari, 2020). The important thing is that employees who were positively infected with Covid-19 do not enter the office until they are completely healed.

COVID-19 not only affects the physical condition but also the mental health of the patient. A person's psychological condition will feel worse if he/she is infected with COVID-19 (Wakhudin et.al., 2020). Therefore, family or the closest people were expected to be able to provide motivation and have a positive influence on

the psychological state of family members who are sick (Fauziah, 2016). Nursing Law Number 38/2014 stated that the attention given to patients being treated is a series of communication processes between patients and their families, or nurses and patients. This is done in order to provide a comfortable environment for patients (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 38, 2014). Baron & Byrne (2005) argued that during the treatment period, patients will recover faster if they receive help or support from the social environment. Thus, it is an encouragement from the closest family members that can help the patient's healing process, so that they can think positively and minimize panic or anxiety to increase the immune system which is one of the factors that help in healing COVID-19.

When going into self-isolation at home, not a few families discriminate against Covid-19 patients. This is also in accordance with initial interviews or preliminary studies on several employees who were infected with COVID-19. According to an employee who was declared a Covid-19 patient, it was revealed that there was a rejection made by the community (Anjani, 2020). It happened when the public knows about it and causes the patient to experience psychological distress. The spokesperson for the COVID-19 task force considers that cases of refusal in patients exposed to the Covid-19 virus

can cause social conflict between patients, the community, and their families (Bodrudoza, et. al, 2020; Karana, 2020).

According to one of the isolated informants, not a few victims who were exposed to Covid-19 were ostracized by their family, friends, and the surrounding community. When an individual was tested positive for Covid-19 and he/she was required to undergo self-isolation, they need support, especially from their closest people. Some employees who were exposed to Covid-19 also received support from their family or close people. This is in accordance with the following preliminary interviews:

"In a down condition when I was tested positive for COVID-19, of course I need support from my family..." (I1, preliminary research, November 13, 2020)

"In don't know if the neighbours are happy or not." (I2, preliminary research, November 28, 2020)

During the pandemic, employers faced difficult obstacles on multiple fronts at once: their selves, family, workers, customers, business partners, government, and so on (ILO, 2020). ILO also added that many steps need to be implemented to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lockdown, physical distancing, and work from home, which was making social interaction difficult, within and outside work. Feeling isolated and lonely could be a

risk for all workers, especially when it runs for a long period. Moreover, loneliness can create havoc on an individual's, mental, physical, and cognitive health (Hawkley & Capitano, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significant negative impacts on healthcare workers' psychological health, fostering issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance (Chirico & Magnavita, 2021). On the other hand, scarce attention has been paid to the role of family support relatively, like emotional support (Shin, Hur, & Park, 2021). Recent COVID-19 research also showed that family support reduces depression (Green, Tappin, & Bentley, 2021). This indicates the necessity of providing psychological support for workers or employees (Alnazly, et. al, 2021). Furthermore, loneliness has notable consequences on work output, limiting individual and team performance, reducing creativity, and impairing reasoning and decision making (Anderson & Thayer, 2018). Hence, particular reflection should be given to workers who struggle with this crisis, especially in this pandemic era.

Departing from this, the researchers wanted to explore the meaning of family support. This is done so that the patient remains enthusiastic about returning to health and recovering. The interest in conducting this research also departed from the fact that many victims could not be

saved. Therefore, the study provides education to the families of other Covid-19 patients to continue providing support to their family members.

Method

This study used a qualitative phenomenological method to understand the meaning of family support during the treatment process undertaken by employees infected with Covid-19. In this study, there were three informants which were gathered using the accidental sampling technique, which means, the researcher chose informants who were easy to find and had experienced the incident. Informants have the following characteristics: 1) An employee who tested positive for COVID-19; 2) Perform self-isolation according to company regulations.

The data collection was carried out using interviews conducted online and offline. Offline interviews were conducted when taking initial data from significant others from key informants. The researcher used key persons as the main informants, and significant others as sources of data triangulation which will be carried out by interviewing the people closest to the informants such as their wives, children, or parents.

This research used semi-structured interviews so that researchers develop the questions during the interview following its

dynamics. Interview guidelines were made so that researchers focus on the problems studied. Interview guidelines also were made based on Friedman (2010) family support theory which has some aspects such as informational, instrumental, and emotional support. In addition, researchers used several tools, such as a voice recorder to record the contents of the conversation when taking data offline.

The researcher made a voice call via WhatsApp which was also recorded with another phone when collecting data online. Notebooks and pens were also used to record some proof during offline and online interviews. The entire data collection process has obtained permission from all informants and significant others written in the informed consent.

Data analysis used the theory of Miles and Huberman (2007) which consists of three processes, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The interview code writing technique used the APA 7th Edition Referencing Guide (2020) technique by writing the initials of the informant's name and adding the interview date behind it, such as (AJ, personal communication, November 15, 2020). It means that researchers conducted personal interviews with informants AJ on November 15, 2020.

Furthermore, the validity of the research was carried out by using

triangulation of sources. Researchers used source triangulation to include several different participants, programs, or settings in trying to understand a phenomenon (Denzin, 1989). This stage was conducted by researchers to get the validity of the interview using significant others of each informant. The researcher interviewed the wife of two informants and the mother of one of the informants. While researchers added 'significant other' as a code writing behind the initial name to make the difference between the code writing of prime informants and significant others themselves.

Result

Profile of Informants
Table 1. Profile of Informants

No	Demographic Data	Informants		
		LD	AG	AJ
1	Sex	M	M	M
2	Age	25	35	32
3	Marriage Status*	S	M	M
4	Working Period (Years)	5	10	5

*M: Married, S: Single

Profile of Significant Others
Table 2. Profile of Significant Others

No	Demographic Data	Names (Anonym)		
		SL	MG	NY
1	Sex	F	F	F
2	Age	52	30	25
3	Status to Informant*	M	W	W

*W: Wife, M: Mother

In this study, there were three informants who worked at Company X and the informants were proven infected by

Covid-19. All informants were male because the victims of Covid-19 at the company are only male employees. The informant is an employee who has been declared cured of the Covid-19 virus. The informants were LD (25 years old) from Surabaya, AJ (32 years old), and AG (35 years old) from Gresik. AG has been working for Company X for 10 years. Both LD and AJ have been working for 5 years.

SL (52 years old) was the significant other for LD and she is LD's mother. Next, was MG (30 years old) and she is AG's wife. NY (28 years) was a significant other for AJ and she is AJ's wife, also she was the youngest of all significant others in this study.

Meaning of Family Support

The family has an important role for LD, the first informant, particularly in his recovery process. When undergoing isolation without a family, LD felt like he was in a flat phase, as the saying goes "living without family made me want to die". Without the support of his family, he also lacked the spirit to live a healthier lifestyle. The third informant, AG, also said that the meaning of the family is like "home", providing a reason for him to return home.

A family is also a place where he can be accepted without demanding anything. Thus, the biggest reason for the informants

to recover and return home was their family. According to AJ, the first informant, when one of the family members is sick, it is the family who cares the most, not others. It was also confirmed by NY, AJ's wife that family is the first support system.

"In my opinion, maybe it is a phase where there is no support, maybe it is a flat phase where everything feels usual. In my opinion, family is a place and a reason to come back home, as well as a place where people or society can accept me as I am so that it can be a reason to go home when we are recovery, come home and a reason to go home, maybe." (LD, **personal communication, November 13, 2020**)

"Yes, it's very important, the most enthusiastic support for healing is from the family." (AJ, **personal communication, November 18, 2020**)

"...for your motivation, especially the people who want to go home quickly and meet their family, that's the motivation that comes from family, so yes, for my children, my wife, I always say I want to meet you quickly and get well soon." (AG, **personal communication, November 14, 2020**)

"If it wasn't me or his family, who else?"(NY, **significant others, personal communication, December 30 2020**)

AJ also admitted that he was stressed and felt that he would not recover if there was no family to help with the recovery process. This was also felt by another informant, AG. To him, family support also played a very important role in the recovery

process. He cannot imagine if he went into isolation without the support of his family. Even while undergoing isolation, AG felt stressed because he couldn't meet his family. He could only buy food and go back to his room because he wasn't allowed to leave. AG added that if there is no support from the family, the process will take longer.

"...yes, if you don't have family support, then you feel more stress, you think that there is no one to support you like that." (AJ, personal communication, November 28, 2020)

"...family support plays a very important role.. if there is no family support, it can be stressful, really stressful. You can't see each other to your family, you can't go anywhere. Just staying in your room and go down to cafeteria to buy a drink and go back to your room..." (AG, personal communication, November 30, 2020)

"...if there is no support from family during self-isolation, the possibility of recovering from Covid-19 disease may take longer, because our thoughts are so chaotic, so the possibility of recovery for Covid-19 disease can be longer..." (AG, personal communication, December 4, 2020)

Family support was also considered significant to help the recovery process of the three informants. The family always supports and never leaves the informants until the isolation process is complete. This made all the informants believe that the role

and support of the family were needed to help the recovery process. According to them, family is the most important thing above all. Family is everything to them. Closeness to the family is needed to follow treatment because it is the family who always encourages recovery.

"...In my opinion, the role of the family is significant to help the healing process..." (LD, personal communication, December 7, 2020)

"...Supporting each other as well." (AJ, personal communication, December 9, 2020)

"In my opinion, family is everything." (AG, personal communication, December 11, 2020)

When the informant LD returned to work, as usual, he felt that there was no difference. None of his friends stayed away from him and instead his friends were happy because the informant was back in healthy condition and able to work again. Different things experienced by AJ. After undergoing a series of isolation and treatment processes, AJ was allowed to return to work. The informant felt embarrassed when he had to gather with his friends. However, his co-workers understand the current state of AJ and continue to apply the health protocols as recommended by the company. AG also experienced different things. After recovering, AG returned to work and some people were still worried about being

contracted by the virus, so they stayed away from AG. However, when someone already understands about COVID-19, they are not worried about it.

"...Never, after being healed, I met the people at the factory and there was no difference..." (LD, personal communication, November 13, 2020)

"...Yeah, it's just normal, a little embarrassing, my friends also understand but yes, my friends know it too, so it's normal to just keep your distance." (AJ, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

"...If you have been exposed to it, you come to work and people don't know about it, they will react differently, but if they already know you've been exposed to Covid-19, you know, they will be keeping distance from you." (AG, personal communication, November 14, 2020)

Forms of family support

When LD was confirmed to have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus, the family provided support in the form of prayers for LD. LD's family also came to the isolation place every day to send food or see LD's condition. Even though they can't meet and can only see through the mirror, that kind of situation made LD enthusiastic to recover.

Support was also given by AJ's family in the form of praying and asking AJ to remain calm so that his thoughts were more positive. AJ's wife also sent AJ's favorite food and gave him what he wanted. AJ's wife also did not forget to give him vitamins for

AJ. Although they were not able to meet directly with AJ and could only look at each other through the window, this had a huge impact on AJ.

"...They pray to support me, encourage me, I live in Surabaya, so every day they send me some snacks to support me..." (LD, personal communication, November 13, 2020)

"That's what they do, giving a lot of prayer, support, told not to think too much about the family, moreover my child and wife keep my spirit on fire." (AJ, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

"...Yes, they support me through praying, they send me delicious food, and then they said not to think too much, because if I think about it a lot, my immune system will be weaken." (AJ, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

"Yes, I meet my family. every day, they send me food every day, I just didn't meet face to face, just in front of the window and the food is given to the nurse. I have talked to them through phone call, video calls." (AJ, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

SL, LD's mother stated that when she found out her child had been infected by the virus, her family felt confused and anxious. After the results of LD's rapid test came out, his family chose to carry out a series of tests. Then, while waiting for the results SL's family was still not calm because the results can only be taken after six days. SL chose to have limited contact with his family and with the surrounding neighborhood. She did that thing in order to

make her family remain calm while waiting for the recovery of LD.

AJ's family also always gave support and their support is not only in the form of food but also prays for AJ. Then AJ's wife always took the time to send food, vitamins, and moral support. This moral support can indirectly encourage AJ to recover and return home to gather with his family. If AJ misses his children, he made video calls through WhatsApp.

"We try to calm down, try not to be too anxious at home, even though people may hear that our family member has been affected. Yes, we were trying to relax, because our family member who sick have been isolated in the hospital." (SL, significant others, personal communication, December 30, 2020)

"So that's why I bring my food and vitamins every day, all of them brought there." (MG, significant others, personal communication, December 14, 2020)

From the first time all informants got their isolation in the hospital, their family members felt psychological pressure. They felt sad, confused, worried, and shocked. It was undeniable because one of the informants had a newborn baby and feared that they will be got exiled from society.

"How can I describe that feeling, yeah, just imagine, you can't smell and swallow. I could say confused and worried, but he is sick actually."

So he has to deal with it." (SL, significant others, personal communication, December 20, 2020)

"First of all, when my husband got infected, I felt shocked. The view and stigma in society about Covid-19, it's kind of scary, it's so threatening. The first time it was definitely shocking moment." (MG, significant others, personal communication, December 31, 2020)

"Of course I feel sad at that time. I'm afraid that we have a baby at home too. But it is what it is, he still have to live with that condition." (NY, significant others, personal communication, December 17, 2020)

Discussion

Frankl (2004) stated that human efforts to find meaning are the main motivators in someone's life, not just secondary rationalizations that appear as instinctual drives. Someone who struggles to find a purpose and meaning in life will have a reason to stay alive and fight for something he wants. This is what the three informants might do. They have their own interpretation of the role of families who have succeeded in helping themselves to recover from COVID-19. In addition, for all informants, family is the fundamental reason for them to recover through the isolation process. Moreover one of the reasons they survive is so that they can return home quickly.

It can't be denied that the stigma which grew in the society was absolutely

scary for all informants. It made them feel scared and anxious. Those stressors could lead to high levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, and psychological distress (Rajkumar, 2020). However, all of the informants and their families claimed that they didn't get any stigma and accepted the situation, and also tried to keep their distance to have an interaction with the neighbourhood.

Previous research showed that positive thought and optimism played a remarkable role in the possibility of growing stronger through difficulty. Social support is one of the positive extra-personal variables that contribute to growth during difficult situations. (Scrignaro et al., 2011) and strengths-based parenting (Zavala & Waters, 2020). Zavala and Waters (2020) added that parents' awareness of and use of their character strengths during parenting, as well as parents' recognition, support, exploration, and reinforcement of their children's character strengths, is the subject of a new area of research called strengths-based parenting. Thus, both social support and strength-based parenting are fundamental in making positive thoughts, especially in this pandemic era.

In this case, families may feel the emotional impact of having to care for someone who is sick. In fact, family participation in the patient-care process will be crucial to helping the healing of the

patient (Gaol, 2016). Moreover, family support can help patients boost their health (Kusumawardana, Tamtomo, Sugiarto, 2017). As a result, it is thought that family support will help to reduce emotional burnout over time (Shin, Hur, & Park, 2021).

The psychological pressure felt by family members is often the result of feelings of helplessness and lack of control. Several different emotional responses were mentioned by the informant's family, namely feelings of sadness, anxiety, and worry. Each emotion has a different effect and depends on the severity of the virus (Golics et al., 2013).

However, LD interprets the role of family support as one of the motivations that made him want to return home. LD considers that family is a home to return to and accept without expecting anything. According to AJ, family is also the most important thing in his life more than anything. AJ and AG interpret the role of family support as a reason for them to get well soon and want to meet their little family. AJ and AG stated that family support is needed and plays a role in helping the self-recovery process, especially for stress relief. This is in accordance with research conducted by Sercekus et al. (2014) which stated that support from family, friends, or medical personnel is very important for patients. Family participation

in the treatment process is a crucial aspect and it becomes important because it helps the healing process of patients during the treatment process (Gaol, 2016). Therefore, families can help patients in dealing with the difficulties they are facing while undergoing treatment.

This research shows that mental health which grows among family members in a nuclear family depends on the closeness between families. Closeness to the family can be a crucial aspect when people deal with problems. One study (Garcia-Huidobro & Mendenhall, 2015) explained that this closeness can be a protector for the family. Families who are not close tend to have a lack of support for each other. Interestingly, Garcia-Huidobro and Mendenhall (2015) added that families who have closeness will be able to pass through a stage of development.

This research is also supported by Friedman (2010) who showed that the family provides support to a family member someone through several forms, such as emotional, instrumental, informational, and reward support. These four types of support emerge in this study. This has an impact on the informant so that the informant can think positively and deal with all pressures that come from the internal and external situation.

Family members who support each other will be interdependent on their

circumstances and will make things more stable. One of the family members who make some informants feel stable is their children. When their children begin to be involved, it will give a distinct impression to informants. Families who pay attention to the welfare of other family members will help the recovery process and avoid stress. According to Wong and colleagues (2019), this is one way that can help families manage on going stress on patients.

Waters and friends (2021) stated that people reported social growth (i.e., taking greater care of family members and giving friends more support during the pandemic) and spiritual growth (i.e., higher levels of appreciation for life). Again, social support is an important factor affecting workers' health and well-being. In particular, social support is a crucial resource in coping with stress and reducing the detrimental effects of stress on health outcomes (Stephen, 2005).

Social support includes a range of mechanisms, including practical help and assistance, encouragement, appreciation, comfort, emotional support, and so on. Individuals who receive social support will feel encouraged and motivated to continue living because they will feel cared for, supported, and respected (Desiningrum, 2010). Giving vocal and nonverbal

information was a type of social assistance (Vaux, 1988).

Sources of social support also came from everywhere. Vaux (1988) stated social support could come from a spouse, family, friend, society, or social organization the individual follows. However, Rodin and Salovey (1986) claimed that family is the most essential source of social support. Moreover, the previous research conducted by Gore (cited in Gottlieb, 1983) also stated that close relatives, such as family members and close friends, provided the majority of social support. Close relationships may aid in the maintenance of good habits (Desiningrum, 2010).

When all the informants returned to work at their respective companies, there were informants who experienced discrimination because they were infected with Covid-19. Nonetheless, the companies should have a protocol to prevent such discrimination.

Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the support provided by the family had meaning for the three informants. The three informants stated that the prayers, enthusiasm, and motivation given to them by their family members had a very positive impact. In addition, the presence of family also made them able to live life even though they are in isolation and also have difficulty

in terms of adapting to the new habit during isolation. The support provided by family members can be used as motivation and stress relievers. The form of support provided by the family was different for each informant. It is like buying food and vitamins that the informants want. Family support also provides strength when informants face discrimination from co-workers.

Suggestions

The results of this study are expected to be developed or can be explored further by looking at gender differences regarding the meaning of family support. More specifically, the results of this research are expected to create a support system and make the company a "second home" for employees affected by Covid-19. Furthermore, the society must enhance their support for each of their families and develop a more intense bond, especially during the pandemic because getting infected with the Covid-19 virus, may affect anyone, and this significant aspect of family support must be held by every family. Those who have family members who are unwell during the pandemic, in particular.

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