

FROM CLIENT TO PARTNER: NEGOTIATING THE MEANING OF POWER ASYMMETRY IN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN WORKER PARENTS AND DAYCARE ORGANIZERS

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Abstract

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The relationship between the parents of the workers and the daycare manager is frequently characterized as evolving from a client-service provider dynamic to a partnership. This qualitative case study conducted at Koala Daycare in Jimbaran challenges the linear narrative by uncovering the complexity of meaning and power negotiation. Through comprehensive observations and interviews with both parents and managers, analyzed using Giddens' Structuration Theory and the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), this study reveals that power relations are dynamic and subject to continuous negotiation. The findings indicate that communication forms a cyclical process, beginning with the negotiation of written rules, followed by the power struggle among experts during the initiation stage, the selective openness of parents, and the paradox of CCTV technological transparency, which simultaneously fosters trust and serves as a supervisory mechanism. The critical conclusion is that what emerges is not a genuine partnership but rather a "pseudo-partnership" – a fragile social order perpetually maintained through the coordination of meaning in everyday communication, amid the tension between transactional and collaborative logic.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci :
Komunikasi Orang
Tua-Daycare;
Negosiasi Makna;
Komunikasi
Asimetris; Teori
Strukturasi,

Hubungan antara orang tua pekerja dan manajer penitipan anak sering dicirikan sebagai berkembang dari dinamis penyedia layanan klien menjadi kemitraan. Studi kasus kualitatif yang dilakukan di Koala Daycare di Jimbaran ini menantang narasi linier dengan mengungkap kompleksitas negosiasi makna dan kekuasaan. Melalui pengamatan dan wawancara komprehensif dengan orang tua dan manajer, dianalisis menggunakan Teori Strukturasi Giddens dan

INTRODUCTION

The rapid social and economic developments of recent decades have significantly transformed family structures and work patterns across society. A particularly notable change is the increased participation of women in the formal labor force, marking a substantial socio-demographic shift characterized by the rise of dual-income households, where both partners are employed (Falkenberg & Monachello, 1990; Raley et al., 2006). According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2021, the global labor market participation rate for women of productive age reached nearly 47%, an increase from approximately 41% in 1990 (International Labour Organization, 2021). In Indonesia, the 2023 National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) indicates that women's labor force participation has risen to 52%, with a significant proportion being of productive age and having children under five who require childcare services (Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, 2023).. In response to this phenomenon, many couples and families with children must address the need for childcare. Economic pressures and individual career aspirations often drive dual employment among couples. This situation is influenced not only by families' increasingly complex economic needs but also by individuals' desire to pursue career development and achieve financial independence. Consequently, this has implications for the reconfiguration of the childcare landscape. Parenting patterns are evolving, with the traditional role of parents as primary caregivers increasingly reliant on external support. Daycare facilities have emerged not merely as supplementary services within the social landscape but as essential institutions that facilitate parenting, providing crucial support in balancing work demands and family responsibilities. This development has significant implications for maintaining family economic stability and enhancing parents' psychological well-being (Crosby & Sabbatini, 2005;

Joseph & Sebastian, 2019). The sustainability of parental productivity in the workforce depends heavily on their confidence and trust in daycare services.

The availability of reliable, high-quality daycare is a critical component of adequate childcare. When parents are assured that their children are receiving safe care and support for optimal development, they can concentrate more effectively and be more productive in their professional roles (Berridge, 1991). This fosters a positive synergy between professional and personal life, ultimately enhancing the family's resilience against social and economic challenges. Daycare institutions serve as a strategic link that aligns the demands of the modern labor market with contemporary family dynamics, while simultaneously supporting the development of future generations of human resources (Crosby & Sabattini, 2005; Joseph & Sebastian, 2019; Kim et al., 2023). However, the relationship between working parents and daycare managers is inherently complex, particularly concerning the tension between transactional and relational logic. On the one hand, this relationship is fundamentally transactional, in which parents pay service fees and anticipate specific outcomes, such as safety, comfort, and stimulation, for their children (Laughlin, 2004). Communication serves as a medium for negotiating relationships and tensions, with each interaction having the potential to either exacerbate or alleviate conflicts arising from differing perceptions of roles and authority (Greer & Bendersky, 2013). Within this context, parents assume the role of 'clients' in a market relationship (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2022; Purola & Kuusisto, 2021).. Conversely, parenting is a practice imbued with emotional, moral, and trust values. The community and experts underscore the importance of partnerships between parents and caregivers to ensure the consistency and quality of early childhood care (Keyes, 2002; Mason et al., 2025). Ideally, this relationship should be collaborative, equitable, and respectful.

The tension between transactional logic ("client") and relational logic ("partner") engenders a complex power dynamic. Although parents are economically positioned as payers, they often find themselves in a vulnerable position concerning information and time. As they are not physically present to observe the caregiving process, they must rely heavily on the caregiver's reports. This situation confers significant expert power upon daycare managers (J. R. French et al., 1959; Katz, 1955). Conversely, caregivers, who exercise operational control over children, frequently feel undervalued and are perceived merely as "babysitters" rather than professional educators, which can lead to feelings of helplessness. Other research indicates that partnership models in communication between parents and daycare managers significantly enhance parental

satisfaction and the quality of childcare services (Hummel et al., 2023; Petrovic et al., 2019). In Indonesia, the development of daycare services continues to face various challenges, including uneven quality standards and limited effective communication between managers and parents. According to national survey data from 2022, only approximately 45% of daycares in urban areas involve parents in decision-making related to childcare (KPPPA, 2022). This indicates a substantial gap in the implementation of the ideal partnership concept. Communication serves as a medium through which these tensions and asymmetries are negotiated. Every interaction between the two parties, from daily reports via online messaging apps and brief conversations during pick-ups to formal meetings, represents a moment where the nature of this relationship is contested (Sutama, 2024; Varenia & Phalguna, 2022). Is a parent's request perceived as "annoying client demands" or "reasonable partner involvement"? Is a daycare policy regarded as "professional authority" or "authoritarian"? Studies have found that partnership relationships based on open dialogue and mutual respect foster an environment that supports child development and strengthens parents' trust in daycare managers (Cook et al., 2024; Hummel et al., 2023).

In this context, the current study examines the negotiation of power asymmetry in communication between working parents and daycare managers. The research aims to elucidate the often-hidden dynamics underlying daily interactions by exploring the intersection, collision, and potential transformation of the discourses of "client" and "partner." Furthermore, this study critically investigates the negotiation process of power asymmetry in communication between working parents and daycare managers. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the communication strategies employed by working parents in negotiating their position and power relative to daycare managers. Additionally, it analyzes the communication strategies daycare managers use to respond to and negotiate their positions and power relative to working parents.

Literature Review

The Complexity of the Parent-Caregiver Relationship: From Transaction to Partnership

The scholarly discourse concerning the relationship between parents and daycare providers has transitioned from a primarily instrumental perspective to a more relational understanding. Initial studies frequently conceptualized this relationship within the context of the service economy, depicting parents as discerning consumers demanding quality, with daycare centers functioning as service providers (Carlson et al., 1997; Cryer et al., 2002; Cryer & Burchinal, 1997).

However, contemporary research increasingly underscores the importance of the "parent-

provider partnership" as a crucial determinant of positive child development outcomes (Keyes, 2002). Reciprocal communication, mutual respect, and shared objectives concerning childcare characterize this partnership. Nonetheless, a critical gap in the literature pertains to the analysis of the inherent tensions in establishing partnerships within fundamentally transactional relationship structures. Research (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2022) indicates that parents possessing substantial economic and cultural capital tend to be more "intrusive," treating caregivers as subordinates, thereby impeding the formation of genuine partnerships. Conversely, caregivers often employ strategies of "impression management" and "information restriction" to preserve their professional autonomy. Consequently, the discourse on partnership frequently clashes with everyday practices that perpetuate hierarchical structures.

Communication as an Arena for Negotiation of Meaning and Power

In this context, communication should not be regarded merely as a neutral medium for exchanging information. Research (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) has identified various barriers to communication, including time constraints, value differences, and negative perceptions between parties. From this perspective, communication becomes a domain where the meanings of roles, responsibilities, and authority are continuously negotiated. Numerous prior studies have concentrated on the effectiveness of specific communication forms (such as textbooks or digital applications) without thoroughly exploring the dynamics of micropower within them (Dunn, 1993). For instance, a caregiver's tone of voice when reporting a minor incident may convey a defensive attitude, or a parent's choice of words in a conversation may sound more like a command than a request. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on micro communication to unravel the negotiation of broader meanings of "who holds power" and "what is right" in childcare.

Power in Childcare Services: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective

The concept of power in the parent-daycare relationship is complex. According to the theory (J. R. French et al., 1959), power arises from several bases: 1) Expert Power: Held by caregivers due to their knowledge of child development and hands-on experience in caring for children throughout the day. 2) Referent Power: Derived from parents' affinity and identification with caregivers. 3) Legitimate Power: Possessed by parents as legal guardians and primary decision-makers for their children. 4) Reward and Coercive Power: Held by parents as the paying party (reward) and their ability to influence their children (coercive). This study posits that asymmetry arises from an unbalanced, context-dependent distribution of power. While parents

may excel in legitimate and reward/coercive power, they heavily rely on the expert and referent power of caregivers. This dependence creates vulnerability and serves as a constant source of tension, which is then managed through communication.

Theoretical Framework

Structuration Theory (Anthony Giddens)

Structuration Theory offers a macro-sociological perspective to comprehend the reciprocal influence between social structures and individual actions. Giddens (1984) challenged the dichotomy between structure and agency by introducing the concept of structural duality, in which structure not only constrains actions but also serves as both the medium and the outcome of those actions. In the context of this study, "Structure" refers to the unwritten rules and resources that shape the parent-daycare relationship, encompassing norms related to "paying clients," "caregiver professionalism," and "ideal partnership." The "Agent" is represented by a parent and a daycare manager. "Communication Practice" is defined as a social action executed by an agent. This theory elucidates that when a parent questions a daycare policy, they are not merely engaging in dialogue but are utilizing their resources (legitimate power) to either reproduce or alter the structure of existing rules. Conversely, when a caregiver adheres to its protocols, it employs resources (the power of its members) to reinforce the structure of professional autonomy. Consequently, each conversation represents an instance in which the asymmetrical power structure is both sustained and potentially transformative. Structuration Theory is anticipated to elucidate the persistence of specific asymmetrical communication patterns, as agents perpetuate them ensnared within existing structures.

Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), developed by (Pearce & Cronen, 1980), serves as an analytical tool for examining communicative interactions. CMM posits that individuals collaboratively construct their social realities through dialogue. This theoretical framework employs the concepts of "conversational turn-taking patterns" (episodes) and a hierarchy of meaning to elucidate how meaning is negotiated. Within the context of this study, CMM will be utilized to: Identify Key Episodes, such as "Daily Report Episodes," "Rush Pick-Up Episodes," or "Conflict Handling Episodes"; Analyze the Communication Patterns within these Episodes, including how conversations are initiated, structured, and concluded, who predominates the discourse, and how specific terms (e.g., "our policy" versus "I'm worried") are employed to

shape meaning; and Examine the Hierarchy of Meaning, determining whether the communicative action in an episode is defined by a higher level of meaning, such as "we are partners" (level of relationship), or specifically by "I am a rightful payer" (level of identity/contract). CMM provides a detailed explanation of how structure is reproduced or transformed, evident in every speech and conversation.

METHODES

This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a single, embedded case study method (Creswell, 1998), to conduct an in-depth investigation into the negotiation process of the meaning of power in communication between working parents and managers at Koala Daycare, Jimbaran, Bali. The selection of this location is based on strategic purposive sampling, given that Jimbaran is characterized by a high concentration of families employed in the tourism sector, which creates unique communication dynamics around work demands and childcare. Data were collected through the triangulation of passive participant observation techniques during critical interactions (such as child pick-up and digital communication) and semi-structured in-depth interviews with 5-7 parents and 3-5 managers/caregivers, selected through snowball sampling and maximum variation sampling. Data analysis adheres to an iterative case study analysis procedure (Yin, 2018), commencing with data organization (compiling), thematic codification (disassembling), narrative reconstruction (reassembling), and culminating in theoretical meaning extraction (interpreting) through the integrative lens of Giddens' Structuring Theory and Coordinated Management of Meaning.

RESULT

Negotiation of Formality and Trust in Initial Relationships

The study's findings indicate that relationships between parents and daycare managers do not develop immediately but rather unfold gradually through a process of negotiation characterized by information exchange and trust-building. The initial phase involves instrumental communication, in which parents, as prospective clients, actively review the daycare's written rules and procedures. This stage, as noted by (Giddens, 1984, 2004, 2014), serves as a mechanism to mitigate uncertainty prior to entering a dependency relationship. Notably, during this phase, the symbolic power resides with the manager, who establishes the "rules of the game" through procedural documentation.

Although parents are technically positioned as the decision-makers, they must initially acquiesce to the pre-established structure before advancing to a more substantive negotiation phase. This preliminary exploration process subsequently transitions to confirmatory communication, wherein parents seek to verify the promises articulated in the promotional materials against the actual conditions observed.

Negotiation of Meaning in Framing Character and Child Parenting

The subsequent phase constitutes the core of negotiating meaning, specifically the alignment of perceptions regarding children's character and parenting practices. This phase involves a transition from rule-centered to child-centered communication. Parents contribute their "domestic knowledge capital" concerning the child, while daycare managers offer their "professional knowledge capital" regarding child development in general.

This interaction can be analyzed through the framework of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), wherein both parties endeavor to reconcile their disparate "reality maps." For instance, when a parent characterizes their child as "shy," the manager may reinterpret this within the context of attachment theory. These negotiations are not always balanced; daycare managers, possessing expert power, frequently hold epistemic authority to redefine a child's characteristics. The resulting written agreement serves not merely as a legal contract but as a communicative artifact that encapsulates the outcome of negotiations at a specific point in time and acts as a reference for future interactions (Sudiartawan & Sutama, 2022).

Information Asymmetry and Parental Impression Management Strategies

The observation that a lack of openness characterizes parental communication highlights intricate power dynamics. This restricted openness is not simply a defensive posture but rather a calculated communication strategy. Parents who find themselves in a vulnerable position due to the need to entrust their most valuable "assets" intentionally regulate the information they disclose. They may withhold specific details about family life or home parenting that they believe could elicit negative evaluations from managers.

This behavior constitutes a form of impression management (Goffman, 1959) to uphold a "face" as competent parents in the presence of perceived experts. Conversely, this restriction of information inadvertently reinforces the information asymmetry that advantages managers. Caregivers, compelled to interpret the child's needs based on incomplete information, must rely on

their professional judgment and experience. This ultimately consolidates their status as "experts" with practical knowledge of children in daycare, thereby intensifying parental dependence.

Transparency as a Transfer of Power and Building Trust

The strategy implemented by daycare managers, which involves sharing schedules and menus and providing access to CCTV, constitutes a form of ritualistic communication serving a dual purpose. Primarily, this strategy aims to foster trust through transparency. However, it can also be critically interpreted as a sophisticated mechanism for shifting power dynamics. By voluntarily offering monitoring access, managers proactively delegate a degree of control to parents.

This action is paradoxical: it appears to be a form of accountability, yet it simultaneously alleviates parental anxiety and minimizes potential disruptions. The provision of CCTV access, in particular, represents a potent symbolic gesture. It creates an illusion of complete transparency, while in reality, the camera's field of view and events occurring beyond its range remain under the manager's exclusive control. Thus, the "openness" presented is, in fact, a curated form of openness. Communication via WhatsApp Groups further establishes a network of mutual supervision, wherein parents not only monitor caregivers but also subconsciously compare their level of involvement with that of other parents. In this context, technology does not eliminate power asymmetry; rather, it transforms it into a subtler, more concealed form.

The communicative relationship between parents and daycare managers is characterized by ongoing negotiation. This relationship is not static; rather, it evolves through various stages, each marked by distinct forms of negotiation. These stages range from the formal establishment of rules to the negotiation of parenting meanings, impression management, and curated transparency. The power dynamics within this relationship are not linear but are instead fluid and context-dependent, shifting between parties based on the stage, available information resources, and symbolic capacity. These findings indicate that the idealized discourse of "partnership" is frequently overshadowed by everyday communication practices that perpetuate asymmetry in subtler ways.

DISCUSSION

From Text to Power: Initial Negotiations through Written Rules

The study's findings indicate that the communication relationship between parents and Koala Daycare commences not at the onset of childcare, but during the pre-initiation phase,

characterized by the exchange of information regarding written rules and policies. Parents actively seek and scrutinize daycare handbooks, demonstrating an effort to mitigate uncertainty and assess the institution's professionalism (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). From a power perspective (J. R. P. French & Raven, 1959), this document serves as an instrument of legitimate and expert power for the daycare. It establishes the "law" governing interactions, thereby positioning the manager as the initial authority figure.

However, a critical analysis through the lens of Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) reveals that parents are not passive recipients of these structures. Their inquiries—such as those regarding procedures for a sick child or late fines—constitute a form of agency that employs coercive power (threats of not selecting their services) and remunerative power (purchasing power) to renegotiate the rules. As Mrs. A indicated, this process is not merely a formality but an attempt to "be clear from the outset." Consequently, the resulting written contract is not merely a legal agreement but a communicative artifact (Yanow, 2006) that encapsulates the initial moment of agreement within a dynamic power relationship. It becomes a structure that will be continually produced and reproduced in daily practice.

Transferring Authority: Negotiating Knowledge in the Initiation Stage

Upon agreement to the contract, communication moves to the initiation phase, which focuses on efforts to "equalize perceptions" through a comprehensive exchange about the child's character, habits, and history. At this juncture, the Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) offers an appropriate framework for comprehending the dynamics involved. Dialogues between parents and caregivers aim to align the "pattern of taking turns of conversations" (episodes) and construct a "coordinated narrative" concerning the child. Parents possess expert power derived from their intimate knowledge of their children, positioning them as the "main speakers" who transfer custodial authority. Conversely, caregivers, such as parents, possess distinct expertise, specifically pedagogical knowledge and experience in managing multiple children. When the caregiver provides "input" to adjust home habits to the daycare routine, as she articulates, an inter-expert negotiation ensues. This interaction results in what may be termed a "pseudo-partnership" (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2022). Although it appears collaborative, subtle hierarchies persist. Parental knowledge is frequently regarded as the initial "truth," while caregiver knowledge functions as an adaptor. This partnership remains overshadowed by the client-service-provider logic, in which parents are the mandate-givers.

Referring to the negotiation theory of meaning, (Cohen, 2000; Druckman et al., 2007) assert that meaning in communication is not something fixed, but is constantly shaped and negotiated through social interaction. In the relationship between parents and daycare managers, this negotiation of meaning includes a shared understanding of each party's expectations, roles, and responsibilities. This process allows for a change in communication patterns from hierarchical to more egalitarian. In addition, the communication culture in Indonesia (Sudiartawan & Utama, 2022), which still tends to be hierarchical and respects authority, also strengthens the pattern of power asymmetry in social interaction (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2009). Therefore, it is important to understand how persuasive communication can be leveraged to overcome these cultural barriers and build a more equal dialogue between working parents and daycare managers.

Boundaries and Strategies: Selective Openness and Interpretive Adaptation

An intriguing observation is that parental communication exhibits selectivity. Employed parents tend to disclose information pertinent to parenting contexts, such as work schedules and children's characteristics, while refraining from sharing narratives concerning broader family dynamics. This phenomenon, acknowledged by managers as an endeavor to preserve the "realm of privacy," serves as a communication strategy to delineate the boundary between the private and daycare (public/professional) spheres (Bulger et al., 2007).

This selective openness also serves as a mechanism for maintaining an image and exerting control over the narrative about their family in caregivers' perceptions. In response, caregivers at Koala Daycare are not passive recipients. They cultivate interpretive adaptability. As an informant disclosed, they must be "observant" and "piece together" insights from the child's behavior and the limited information provided by parents. This strategy represents a practical and responsive application of expert power. These findings contribute to the literature by demonstrating that, amidst information asymmetry, caregivers are not passive victims but rather active agents who interpret and improvise to address children's needs, embodying a form of "emotional labor" and "intuitive practice" that is frequently overlooked.

In this context, the relationship between the worker's parents and the daycare manager is crucial, as the quality of this interaction directly influences the child's welfare and the parents' satisfaction with the services provided (Smith & Birch, 2014). However, these relationships often exhibit an asymmetrical communication pattern, in which the manager, as the service provider, holds a more dominant position of power relative to the parent, who is the client.

This power asymmetry can pose challenges in communication, including an imbalance in information control, unclear roles, and potential conflicts that may impede the development of healthy partnership relationships. The impact of this power asymmetry extends beyond the psychological effects on the parents, who may feel undervalued or unheard, to affect the effectiveness of communication and the quality of service. According to research (Crott et al., 1980), communication characterized by power asymmetry can lead to miscommunication, tension, and even confrontation, which are detrimental to both parties. In the context of daycare, this may lead to low parental satisfaction and a decline in childcare quality.

Nonetheless, this relationship need not remain static within a framework of power asymmetry. Through an effective process of persuasive communication, both parties can negotiate meaning and cultivate a more egalitarian and collaborative relationship (Sunetra & Wijaya, 2024). Persuasive communication, defined as the process of consciously and strategically influencing others' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, is a crucial tool for mitigating power inequality and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships. In this context, parents transition from passive clients to active partners who contribute to decision-making and service quality (Swani, Ni Made, 2024).

Oversight in Transparency Through Visual Media

Koala Daycare employs a technology transparency strategy to foster and sustain trust by sharing regular schedules and menu photographs and, most notably, providing live CCTV access. From one perspective, this constitutes an effective communication strategy, as it empowers parents by reducing uncertainty and offering a semblance of virtual presence, thereby enhancing the trust of working parents (Crosby & Sabattini, 2005). However, from a critical standpoint informed by Foucault's (1977) theories, this practice establishes a panoptic surveillance mechanism. The CCTV system transforms parents into potential "faceless supervisors" who are perpetually present, subjecting caregivers to constant observation.

This dynamic fosters self-discipline among caregivers, compelling them to maintain a professional demeanor consistently, yet simultaneously exacerbates their emotional burden (Carey & Sutton, 2024) and stress, as acknowledged by the caregivers themselves. Consequently, the trust engendered through this technology is paradoxical, as it is a verified trust predicated on the capacity for supervision rather than on organic interpersonal relationships. These findings align with research (Yigit & Ay, 2019) concerning the "impression management" that caregivers must undertake in the digital communication era.

Synthesis: The Ever-Shifting Power in the Coordination of Meaning

In summary, the dynamics at Koala Daycare demonstrate that power relations are not static but rather involve a continuous and cyclical process of negotiation. The integration of Structuration Theory and Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) effectively elucidates this complexity. Structures, encompassing rules, norms as clients/partners, and hierarchies, are both produced and reproduced through the communicative actions of agents, namely parents and caregivers, across various episodes. At each stage—pre-initiation, initiation, and operational—power shifts contextually.

Initially, parents exert dominance through their economic power, followed by their influence as personal experts during the initiation stage. Conversely, caregivers assume control with their authority as professional and operational experts during the custodial phase. The "partnership" that emerges is a fragile construct, a social reality that both parties continuously coordinate through dialogue. Together, they manage the meaning of this relationship, negotiating between the transactional logic of the "client" and the relational logic of the "partner," in a nuanced yet power-laden communicative interaction.

The phenomenon of power asymmetry in communication between parents and daycare managers is not uncommon. In numerous social interactions involving service providers and service users, there is often a tendency for one party to dominate due to greater authority. French and Raven elucidate the various power bases that frequently manifest in social interactions, including legitimate power, coercive power, expert power, referent power, and reward power (J. R. P. French & Raven, 1959). In the context of daycare, managers typically possess legitimate and expert powers, as they hold authority in service management and possess expertise in childcare. Conversely, parents, despite being the financial contributors to the services, often occupy a less empowered position in day-to-day decision-making.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the relationship between parents and daycare managers constitutes a dynamic process of power negotiation, rather than a mere transition from client to partner. Through everyday communication, asymmetric structures are continually contested, resulting in a fragile "pseudo-partnership" marked by tension between transactional and collaborative logics. This research contributes to the fields of organizational and family communication by integrating Giddens' Structuration Theory and the Coordinated Management of

Meaning (CMM). The findings expand the understanding of how power asymmetry is not only reproduced but also actively negotiated through everyday micro communication practices within the context of emotionally charged professional services. The concept of "pseudo-partnership" emerges as a novel theoretical contribution to comprehending the complexity of the relationship between service providers and clients in the context of childcare in the digital age.

For daycare managers, these findings underscore the need to establish communication guidelines that encompass initial promotion, emphasizing transparency and empathy. Additionally, it is imperative to provide caregivers with training to manage parental expectations and the demands of digital supervision effectively. For parents, this research highlights the significance of understanding power dynamics in their interactions with caregivers, promoting more equitable and collaborative communication between the two parties, and fostering an optimal parenting environment for early childhood development.

This study is confined to a single case study at Koala Daycare Jimbaran, which possesses a distinct socio-cultural and economic context; thus, the transferability of the findings requires careful contextual consideration. Although data triangulation was employed, the interviews' depth may still be limited to participants' surface perceptions. Furthermore, the research has not comprehensively examined the child's perspective as a crucial subject in these communication dynamics, which could serve as a focal point for future research.

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