



Breaking Down Barriers And Enhancing Communication Skills in Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Communication is an integral part of nursing skills. Comprehensive knowledge in this area is highly essential for a nurse. This research aims to explore nursing communication skills, barriers, and resolution strategies

Methods: Literature review design. Using the PICO approach with specific keywords. Thirty-six journals were identified from online databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, covering both English and Indonesian language studies, including quantitative, qualitative, literature, and scoping reviews.

Results: The findings of this research illustrate that effective communication encounters several obstacles, such as understaffing, heavy workloads, language and cultural disparities, hierarchical systems, insufficient training, and physical or psychological challenges. Proposed solutions for effective communication encompass understanding patient requirements, highlighting empathy, nurturing adaptability and patience, being responsive, ongoing learning and employing communication models, tackling cross-cultural concerns, utilizing technology, and advocating for interdisciplinary collaboration to ensure comprehensive patient care and smooth information exchange among healthcare professionals.

Conclusion: Implementation of these solutions aims to enhance nursing communication quality.

INTRODUCTION

The ability of nurses to perform nursing care is greatly influenced by their proficiency in effective communication. Ivana & Kurniawati (2023) state that communication is deemed effective when the message conveyed by the sender is received accurately by the recipient with the same intended meaning, without any additions or omissions. In the healthcare context, interpersonal communication, for example between nurses and patients (Khairani et al., 2021), plays a crucial role.

Nurses need to reflect on their personal behavior and communication styles, recognize and address cognitive biases, manage stress, and control emotional reactions in challenging situations. This helps nurses remain calm and effective in any situation (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022).

The importance of interpersonal communication by nurses with patients aligns with the research conducted by Hamdiah & Budiyanto (2024), indicating a correlation between interpersonal communication and patient satisfaction at Pontang Primary Health Care Center. Besides patient communication, communication with patient families is also crucial, especially in sensitive situations where nurses must acknowledge the significant role of families (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022).

Nonverbal communication also plays a crucial role in nurse-patient interactions. Analysis of nonverbal communication highlights the importance of eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, and judicious use of touch in building positive relationships with patients (Jin, 2023).

Nurses often face communication barriers and cultural challenges in delivering quality care. Interdisciplinary communication in critical patient care heavily relies on the accessibility and responsiveness of consultation teams, with barriers such as social norms, hierarchy, cognitive biases, and relationships hindering the creation of shared mental models and situational awareness (Larsen et al., 2021; Liu, 2021). Patient conditions, negative attitudes, and high workloads are also barriers to therapeutic communication, with the involvement of patient families considered crucial (Appiah et al., 2023).

One proposed solution is adequate communication training, which can enhance effective communication skills among healthcare professionals. Zota et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of adequate health communication training as a critical factor in improving professional-patient relationships, patient satisfaction, and physical and emotional health

outcomes. Giordano et al. (2024) state that structured solutions are needed to address threats to nursing and public health workforces while strengthening the skills of current and future healthcare workers.

This research encourages nurses to understand effective communication strategies, barriers, and strategies to overcome them based on findings from various evidence-based practices.

METHODS

In this evidence-based critical review, the emphasis lies on the framework of communication skills within the nursing context. Before delving into literature search, the researcher formulated a PICO as a guide for the literature review:

P: Nurses and healthcare providers

I: Communication skills training

C: Absence of structured communication skill development programs

O: Improved communication effectiveness and reduced communication barriers

In the process of compiling this literature review, the researcher underwent several stages. The initial phase involved sourcing materials from academic databases such as Pubmed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Science Direct. Searches were conducted using relevant keywords, including “nurse communication skills,” “nurse communication barriers,” and “strategies to overcome nurse communication barriers”. Subsequently, articles meeting these inclusion criteria were included for further review in the literature analysis.

The search results were then analyzed to assess their suitability according to the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Year of Publication: Articles published between 2021 and 2024.
2. Language: Articles available in English and Indonesian.
3. Focus: Studies focusing on nurse communication skills.
4. Availability: Full-text articles.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Year of Publication: Articles published before 2021.
2. Language: Articles not available in English or Indonesian.
3. Focus: Studies not focused on nurse communication skills.

4. Availability: Non-full-text articles.

RESULTS

After conducting keyword searches and carefully applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the results of the literature search will be presented in the table below:

Table 1. Findings of articles retrieved from the database

Databases	Articles	Screening articles	Found articles
Pubmed	1.324	45	23
Gogle Scholar	990	10	7
Scopus	43	9	3
Science Dirrect	1.794	4	3
Total	4.169	68	36

In the effort to gather relevant articles for research, searches were conducted through major databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect. From PubMed, a total of 1,324 articles were found. Following a rigorous screening process, 45 articles were shortlisted for further review, and out of these, 23 articles were deemed relevant based on the inclusion criteria. The search via Google Scholar yielded 990 initial articles, but only 10 were selected for further screening, with 7 found to be relevant and meeting the inclusion criteria. Scopus produced a smaller number of articles, with 43 in total. After screening 9 articles, only 3 were found to be relevant according to the inclusion criteria. ScienceDirect resulted in the largest number of articles, with 1,794 identified. However, after screening, only 4 articles were selected for review, and 3 of these were considered relevant and met the inclusion criteria.

Overall, from a total of 4,169 articles found across all databases, 68 articles were chosen for further screening. Of these screened articles, 36 were found to be relevant and met the established inclusion criteria. This screening process highlights a high level of selectivity, ensuring that only the most relevant and high-quality articles were included in the research. Thus, more than half of the screened articles (53%) met the relevance and inclusion criteria, underscoring the importance of the screening process in identifying literature that truly supports the research being conducted.

DISCUSSION

Nurse Communication Skills

Core Communication Skills (17 Main Learning Outcomes) according to Pérez-Martín, A. M et al., (2022) include:

1. Recognizing mechanisms influencing clinical communication towards health outcomes.
2. Conducting personalized clinical interviews by integrating nursing context and communication skills.
3. Building nurse-patient relationships where patients feel comfortable and heard.
4. Understanding and responding appropriately to patients’ non-verbal language.
5. Applying social skills to effectively greet and bid farewell to patients.
6. Recognizing and empathetically responding to patients’ emotions in challenging situations.
7. Building relationships based on respect for patients’ rights and individuality.
8. Using active listening techniques verbally and non-verbally.
9. Accompanying physical examinations appropriately.
10. Communicating nursing care risks and discomfort adequately.
11. Adjusting communication to patients’ understanding levels.
12. Clearly explaining benefits, risks, and outcomes of nursing interventions.
13. Checking patient understanding and facilitating expression of doubts.

14. Delivering tailored nursing care information according to patient tolerance and needs.
15. Exploring patients' disposition and capacity to facilitate engagement in care.
16. Adapting communication skills for specific psychiatric contexts and patients with sensory issues.
17. Adjusting communication strategies for patients of various age groups.

The integration of these prioritized communication skills into nursing curricula is essential to enhance patient care outcomes and ensure effective communication in healthcare settings. High consensus among experts underscores the universal importance of these skills across cultural and national contexts (Pérez-Martín, A. M et al., 2022).

Therapeutic communication can help nurses achieve their goals. Effective nurse-patient communication can enhance clinical outcomes and increase patient satisfaction (Mersha et al., 2023). Effective communication skills between nurses and patients' families during the infusion placement process play a crucial role in reducing the anxiety and tension of the patient's family. Good communication enables them to better understand the infusion placement process, the patient's condition, and the actions taken by the nurse. Improving nurse communication skills can streamline the infusion placement process, reduce conflicts between nurses and patients, and increase patient and family satisfaction (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021).

In addition to communicating with patients, communication with patients' families is also important, especially in sensitive situations where nurses must acknowledge the significant role of the family (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022). In the professional environment, inter- and intra-professional communication becomes a key aspect. Nurses must be able to communicate effectively with other healthcare professionals, facilitate smooth information flow within the team, provide constructive feedback, and maintain patient information confidentiality (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022).

Intrapersonal communication is also equally important. Nurses need to reflect on their personal behavior and communication styles, recognize and overcome cognitive biases, manage stress, and control emotional reactions in challenging situations. This will help nurses remain calm and effective in any situation (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022).

Mastering various communication channels, including face-to-face, written, electronic, and telephone

communication, is also a must. Effective use of various communication channels will ensure that messages are conveyed clearly and accurately (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022). Additionally, nurses must be able to adapt their communication skills to various specific situations, including managing emotions, recognizing cultural and social diversity, and promoting health behaviors (Pérez-Martín et al., 2022).

According to research, nurse managers have high communication skills and low anxiety levels, although they often face stressful situations. Although there is a relationship between anxiety and some personality aspects such as emotional stability and fear, nurse managers tend to be able to manage their anxiety well without affecting their communication abilities (Colomer-Sánchez et al., 2021).

Regarding empathy and communication skills, a study showed that nursing students in northern Iran have poor communication skills and high alexithymia, despite their high levels of empathy. However, there is no significant correlation between empathy, alexithymia, and communication skills (Sharafkhani et al., 2023).

Motivation for nursing students to learn Mandarin includes personal development, international career opportunities, and the need to serve Mandarin-speaking patients. Cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding are also important factors (Dos Santos, 2021).

The use of technology-based simulation in nursing education indicates that students often use non-therapeutic communication patterns. Nursing education needs to expand the scope of communication learning, including communication among medical staff and the use of standardized communication tools such as SBAR (Lee et al., 2021).

Nonverbal communication also plays a significant role in nurse-patient interactions. Nonverbal communication analysis shows the importance of eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, and judicious use of touch in building positive relationships with patients (Jin, 2023).

Nurse satisfaction in communicating in English with patients is more influenced by confidence in grammar, sociolinguistic, and strategic language abilities than factors such as work experience, professional degrees, or education levels. In this regard, confidence plays a key role in effective communication (Lee & Son, 2022).

Nurses must maintain a balance between empathy with patients and families and avoid empathy fatigue (Bry et al., 2023). Skills in active listening and

interdisciplinary communication are crucial to ensure quality care (Cheung et al., 2021).

Interdisciplinary communication in critical care for injured patients is highly dependent on the accessibility of consultation teams and consultants. Responsiveness is key to improving accessibility and facilitating interdisciplinary communication (Liu, 2021).

Therapeutic touch by nurses has a significant impact on communication and often receives positive responses from patients. Nurses' attitudes and judicious use of therapeutic touch are crucial in building good relationships with patients (Appiah et al., 2023).

In remote consultations, nursing students tend to have skills in welcoming patients and showing empathy, but they struggle to explore patients' psychosocial issues and expectations. Nursing education needs to address these aspects to improve the quality of communication in clinical situations (Garat Escudero et al., 2022).

Teamwork and effective communication are also important in the context of midwifery care. Clear and assertive speaking skills, conflict management, and the ability to collaborate with other team members are crucial to ensuring quality care (Schmiedhofer et al., 2021).

Intercultural communication in long-term care highlights the importance of good relationships between residents and nursing staff as well as family involvement in care, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. This indicates that effective communication skills are not only important in specific cultural contexts but also in various cultural backgrounds (Latifovic & Händler-Schuster, 2023).

Conversations about serious illness are influenced by clinical culture, interprofessional empowerment, perceived conversation impact, and practice norms. Implementing serious illness care programs requires strategies to enhance clinical culture to support individual-centered conversations (Paladino et al., 2023).

Most nurses in inpatient settings have good knowledge of therapeutic communication and implement it well. Although there is no direct relationship between knowledge and implementation, other factors such as attitudes, values, and workplace culture can influence the implementation of therapeutic communication (Moykari et al., 2023).

Therapeutic communication involves building a strong relationship with patients, speaking kindly, listening attentively, and showing empathy. This helps build trust and provide more holistic care to patients, ultimately improving the quality of care and patient satisfaction (Jack, K., Ridley, C., & Turner, S., 2023).

Communication Barriers in Nursing Context

Communication barriers in patient care involve complex institutional and personal factors. At the institutional level, a lack of nursing staff, high workloads, and time constraints are major barriers. Unconducive care environments, such as noise and poor room conditions, also affect communication (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021). Additionally, managing adult patients with communication disorders poses significant challenges, particularly related to expressive and receptive language difficulties and a lack of training in using communication aids (Rathiram et al., 2022).

Nurses often face communication and cultural barriers in providing quality care. Interdisciplinary communication in critical patient care heavily relies on the accessibility and responsiveness of consultation teams, with barriers such as social norms, hierarchy, cognitive biases, and relationships hindering the creation of shared mental models and situational awareness (Larsen et al., 2021; Liu, 2021). Patient conditions, negative patient attitudes, and high workloads also pose barriers to therapeutic communication, with the involvement of patient families in care considered essential (Appiah et al., 2023).

Language barriers can affect access to care, quality, and health outcomes. These barriers occur not only during medical consultations but also before and after receiving care, disrupting health system navigation, therapeutic relationship development, and increasing the risk of medical errors (Pandey et al., 2021). Barriers to initiating conversations about Advance Care Planning (ACP) and palliative care include doubt, lack of understanding, cultural and language differences, cognitive decline, and lack of social support. These barriers also include professional discomfort, physician resistance, time constraints, delayed conversations, and policy implementation challenges (Kim & Flieger, 2023; Alotni et al., 2023).

Barriers to healthcare team collaboration include a lack of understanding of each team member's role, limited resources, and increased administrative tasks. Hierarchy barriers in healthcare team structures can also hinder good communication and effective collaboration (Schmiedhofer et al., 2021). The lack of nurse training in delivering bad news and communicating prognosis indicates the importance of interprofessional collaboration to ensure quality care (Agnese et al., 2022; Saleh, 2022).

Effective cross-cultural communication requires addressing more than just language barriers or literacy

issues. Brief encounters between patients and service providers are often insufficient to address complex issues such as health literacy, cultural beliefs, structural racism, and technological access (Ogbogu et al., 2022). Patient care complexity can be challenging due to limited knowledge of the roles of other professions and a lack of familiarity with the application of interprofessional competencies in clinical contexts (Kleib et al., 2021).

Ineffective communication barriers between healthcare providers (HCPs) and patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Chronic Diseases (CD) include difficulty understanding abstract language and the need for alternative communication methods such as text-to-voice or writing applications. Lack of training and competence among service providers in communication negatively impacts patient healthcare experiences (Shady et al., 2024).

Studies also indicate that communication skills considered important include listening to patients, delivering bad news, responding to questions clearly, and explaining issues and treatment plans in simple language. Major barriers include time constraints, high patient numbers, and patient emotional conditions (Zota et al., 2023). Physical barriers such as hearing or vision impairments, environmental noise, and discomfort, as well as psychological barriers such as prejudice and negative stereotypes, can also affect communication (Jack et al., 2023).

End-of-life communication strategies for healthcare professionals emphasize the importance of patient-centered communication, yet the lack of patient and family insight into strategy development remains an issue (Chen et al., 2023). Major barriers to nurse communication with patients from diverse cultural backgrounds include language differences, lack of education and training, and fatigue and high workloads (Lestari et al., 2023). In the context of pediatric care in hospitals, limitations in family presence, lack of trust, and effective communication are major obstacles in implementing family-centered care (Mufida et al., 2023).

Solutions to Communication Barriers

Solutions to Overcome Communication Barriers in Healthcare Settings are crucial to enhancing the quality of care and the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients. Various studies have identified several solutions that can be adopted to address these challenges.

One proposed solution is adequate communication training, which can enhance effective communication

skills for healthcare personnel. Zota et al. (2023) highlight the importance of adequate healthcare communication training as a key factor in improving professional-patient relationships, patient satisfaction, and physical and emotional health improvements.

Furthermore, Kwame and Petrucka (2021) emphasize the need for better understanding of patients and their needs, as well as demonstrating empathy and attention as factors that can enhance patient-centered communication. They also highlight the importance of active, transparent, and collaborative communication between nurses, patients, and patient families.

Studies by Giménez-Espert, Maldonado, & Prado-Gascó (2023) indicate that nursing students tend to have higher levels of empathy and emotional intelligence than nurses. However, increased clinical experience can lead to a decrease in empathy. Therefore, suggested solutions include improving nursing education that focuses on empathy and emotional intelligence development, as well as using learning methods involving clinical simulations and role-playing.

Jack, Ridley, & Turner (2023) recommend several practical solutions, including adaptability in changing communication styles, use of simple language, patience, and empathy, as well as providing alternative communication methods for those with sensory or technological limitations. They also emphasize the importance of education and training to enhance communication skills and cultural awareness.

Additionally, Liu (2021) highlights the importance of responsiveness in creating psychological safety in interdisciplinary communication. He emphasizes that responsiveness is key to improving accessibility and facilitating interdisciplinary communication.

Furthermore, Schmiedhofer et al. (2021) recommend the need to enhance interprofessional communication training in the context of midwifery care, to build trust within the team and facilitate more open and effective communication.

In the context of clinical practice, various models such as the Person-Centered Care and Communication Continuum (PC4) have also been proposed as frameworks to facilitate patient-centered communication (Kwame & Petrucka, 2021). Additionally, various communication training programs, such as those based on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) or team-based simulations, have been proven effective in improving healthcare professionals' communication skills (Yang & Kim, 2022; Del Vecchio et al., 2022).

In efforts to address cross-cultural communication

barriers, service providers also need to anticipate and address these challenges by offering multilingual educational resources, interpreters, and understanding socio-economic factors that affect patients (Ogbogu et al., 2022).

Moreover, the use of technology, such as Virtual Patients (VP), has been shown as an effective tool in training nursing students' communication skills and preparing them for real clinical situations (Sezer et al., 2023).

Ultimately, an interprofessional approach, responsiveness to patient needs and preferences, and evidence-based approaches in developing effective healthcare communication solutions are key to overcoming these barriers (Schmiedhofer et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Therapeutic communication between nurses and patients, as well as patients' families, has a positive impact on clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. However, several barriers such as nursing staff shortages, non-conducive work environments, and language barriers affect the quality of communication. Proposed solutions include adequate communication training, increased empathy, responsiveness to patient needs, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

SARAN

By implementing these solutions, it is hoped that there will be an improvement in the quality of communication in healthcare.

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