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Therapeutic Communication in Nursing Practice: A Systematic Review of Synthesizing Evidence for Enhanced Practice and Patient Outcome

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ABSTRACT Therapeutic communication represents a fundamental component of professional nursing practice, directly influencing patient satisfaction, treatment adherence, and overall healthcare outcomes. Despite its recognized importance, nurses often encounter challenges in implementing therapeutic communication effectively due to various interpersonal, organizational, and technological complexities. Therefore, this study aims to systematically synthesize existing evidence on the dimensions, barriers, and innovative strategies of therapeutic communication in nursing practice to enhance patient outcomes. This study employed a systematic review design, analyzing articles retrieved from databases including PubMed, Scopus, and ProQuest. The search was limited to publications between 2018 and 2022. A total of 103 articles were initially identified, and after removing duplicates and conducting eligibility screening based on predefined inclusion criteria, 8 studies were selected following the PRISMA guidelines. Data were extracted and analyzed to identify key themes and patterns related to therapeutic communication. The findings revealed several critical dimensions of therapeutic communication, including empathy, emotional support, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and the establishment of collaborative nurse-patient relationships. Additionally, common barriers such as workload, time constraints, and communication gaps were identified. The integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence also emerged as an innovative approach to enhancing communication effectiveness in healthcare settings. In conclusion, therapeutic communication remains a vital determinant of patient-centered care and positive health outcomes. Strengthening nurses' communication competencies, addressing systemic barriers, and leveraging technological innovations are essential strategies to optimize nurse-patient interactions. Future research should focus on developing standardized communication frameworks and evaluating the effectiveness of technology-assisted communication interventions in diverse clinical contexts.

INDEX TERMS Therapeutic Communication, Nursing Practice, Nurse-Patient Relationship, Patient Outcomes, Healthcare Communication

I. INTRODUCTION

Therapeutic communication is a critical component of nursing practice that significantly influences patient outcomes, satisfaction, and the overall quality of healthcare services. In modern healthcare environments, nurses are required not only to perform clinical procedures but also to establish meaningful interpersonal relationships with patients. However, the increasing complexity of healthcare systems, high patient loads, and time constraints often hinder the effective implementation of therapeutic communication. Several studies have reported that ineffective communication contributes to patient dissatisfaction, increased anxiety, and reduced adherence to treatment plans

[1]–[4]. These issues highlight the urgent need to strengthen communication competencies in nursing practice.

Recent advancements have introduced various state-of-the-art approaches to improve therapeutic communication. Simulation-based learning, communication skills training, and patient-centered care models have been widely adopted in nursing education and clinical practice [5]–[8]. Additionally, digital health technologies, including telehealth systems and artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted communication tools, have emerged as innovative methods to support nurse-patient interactions [9]–[11]. Empirical evidence indicates that these approaches can enhance empathy, active listening, and patient engagement, which are

essential elements of therapeutic communication [12]–[14]. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration models have also been developed to improve communication effectiveness within healthcare teams [15].

Despite these developments, several research gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on isolated aspects of therapeutic communication, such as training interventions or patient satisfaction, without providing a comprehensive synthesis of its multidimensional components [16], [17]. Second, there is limited integration of evidence regarding barriers, influencing factors, and outcomes within a unified analytical framework. Barriers such as workload, emotional exhaustion, and organizational constraints continue to impede effective communication practices [18]–[20]. Third, although digital technologies are increasingly utilized in healthcare, their role in enhancing therapeutic communication has not been thoroughly explored, particularly in diverse clinical settings [21], [22]. Therefore, a more comprehensive and integrative review is needed.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to systematically review and synthesize recent literature on therapeutic communication in nursing practice, focusing on its dimensions, barriers, influencing factors, and innovative strategies to improve patient outcomes.

This study offers several key contributions. First, it provides a comprehensive synthesis of therapeutic communication by integrating its conceptual dimensions, determinants, and outcomes into a single framework. Second, it identifies and critically evaluates the major barriers affecting communication effectiveness in nursing practice. Third, it explores emerging innovations, including digital and technology-assisted approaches, that can enhance communication quality in healthcare settings. These contributions are expected to support the development of more effective communication strategies for nurses, educators, and policymakers.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section II describes the research methodology, including data sources, inclusion criteria, and data analysis procedures. Section III presents the findings of the systematic review. Section IV discusses the results in relation to existing literature, including implications and limitations. Finally, Section V concludes the study and provides recommendations for future research.

II. METHOD

This study employed a systematic review design to comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing evidence related to therapeutic communication in nursing practice. A systematic approach was selected to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility in summarizing findings from previous studies. The review process was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to enhance the validity and reliability of the study [23].

A. STUDY DESIGN AND APPROACH

This research utilized a retrospective, non-experimental design, as it analyzed previously published studies rather than collecting primary data from human participants. The

study did not involve randomization or intervention but instead focused on identifying patterns, themes, and relationships across multiple research findings. The systematic review approach enabled the integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of therapeutic communication, including its dimensions, barriers, and outcomes.

B. DATA SOURCES AND SEARCH STRATEGY

A structured literature search was conducted across three major electronic databases: PubMed, Scopus, and ProQuest. These databases were selected due to their extensive coverage of healthcare, nursing, and interdisciplinary research. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to maximize the retrieval of relevant studies. The primary search terms included: “therapeutic communication,” “nursing,” “patient outcomes,” “communication barriers,” and “healthcare communication.” These terms were combined using operators such as AND and OR to refine the search results.

The search was limited to articles published between 2019 and 2024 to ensure that the findings reflected recent developments in the field. Additionally, only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English were included to maintain the quality and consistency of the data sources.

C. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

To ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) studies focusing on therapeutic communication in nursing practice; (2) articles reporting empirical findings, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods studies; (3) studies examining communication outcomes, barriers, or interventions; and (4) publications within the specified time frame (2019–2024).

Exclusion criteria included: (1) articles not related to nursing or healthcare communication; (2) conference abstracts, editorials, and opinion papers without empirical data; (3) duplicate studies; and (4) articles with incomplete or inaccessible full texts. The application of these criteria ensured that only high-quality and relevant studies were included in the analysis.

D. STUDY SELECTION PROCESS

The study selection process followed the PRISMA framework, consisting of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, all records identified from the database search were imported into a reference management system, and duplicates were removed. Subsequently, titles and abstracts were screened to exclude irrelevant studies. Full-text articles of the remaining studies were then assessed for eligibility based on the predefined criteria. Finally, studies that met all inclusion criteria were included in the systematic review.

E. DATA EXTRACTION AND VARIABLES

Data extraction was conducted using a standardized form to ensure consistency across studies. The extracted data included: author(s), year of publication, study design, sample characteristics, setting, key variables, and main findings. The

primary variables analyzed in this study included dimensions of therapeutic communication (e.g., empathy, active listening), influencing factors (e.g., nurse experience, workload), barriers (e.g., time constraints, organizational issues), and patient outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, anxiety reduction).

F. DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach. This method involved identifying recurring themes and patterns across the selected studies. The analysis process consisted of three stages: (1) coding the extracted data, (2) grouping codes into broader categories, and (3) developing overarching themes that represent the key findings of the review. This approach allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative evidence [24].

G. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

To ensure the reliability of the findings, the methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using standardized appraisal tools, such as the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. Each study was evaluated based on criteria including study design, sample size, data collection methods, and risk of bias. Only studies

that met acceptable quality standards were included in the final synthesis [25].

H. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As this study was based on previously published literature, it did not involve direct human participation and therefore did not require ethical approval. However, ethical considerations were maintained by properly citing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. The study adhered to academic integrity standards throughout the research process.

III. RESULTS

Eight articles that meet the criteria that have reviewed are summarized. These were published in 2017-2022. Based on the PRISMA framework, a systematic search was conducted to identify relevant studies on therapeutic communication in the nurse-patient relationship. The PRISMA framework was followed for this research to ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach to identifying and synthesizing relevant studies on therapeutic communication in the nurse-patient relationship.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the study selection process based on the PRISMA framework, which consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the identification stage, a total of 103 articles were retrieved

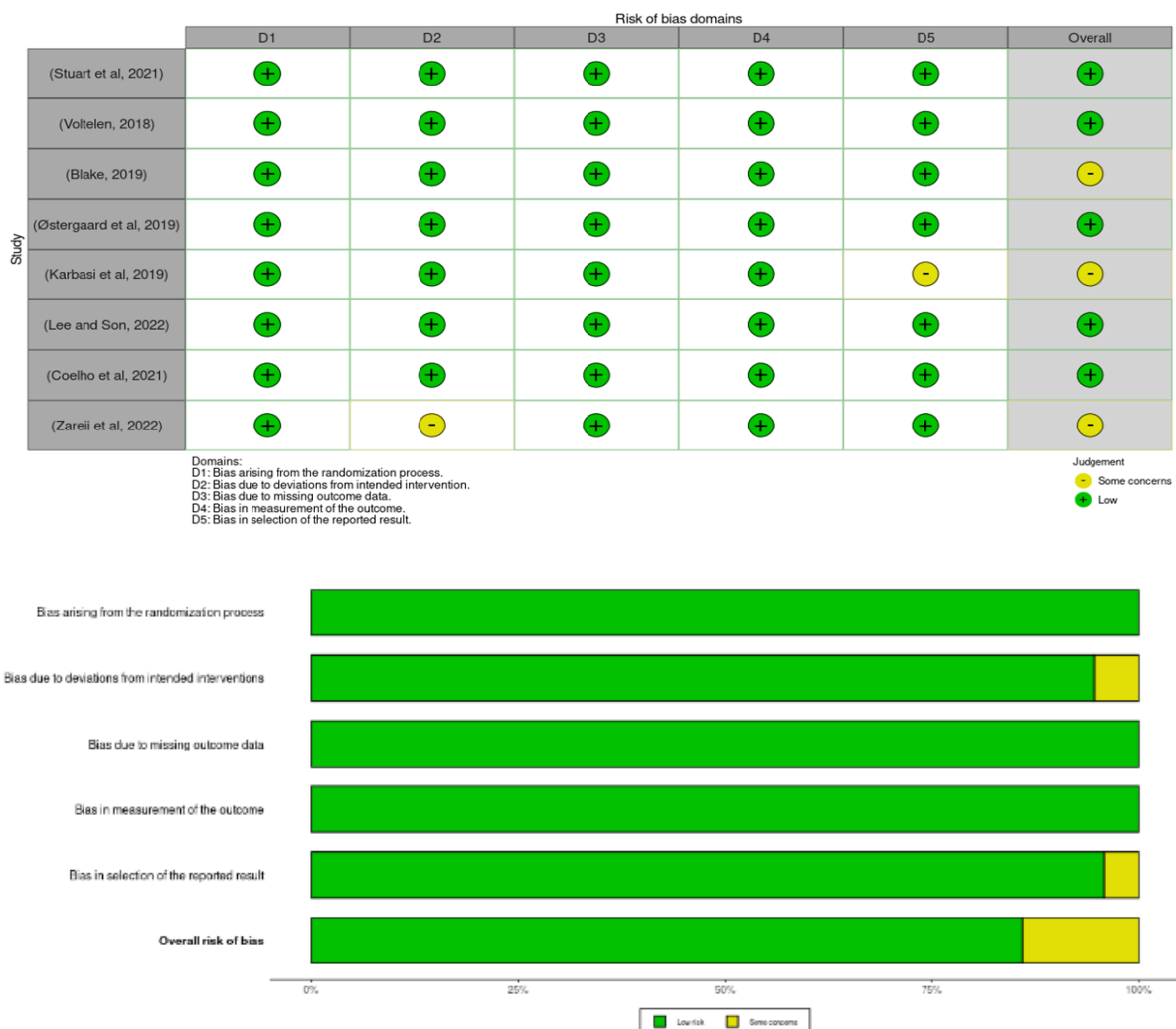


FIGURE 1. Risk of bias articles in review (McGuinness and Higgins, 2020)

from three electronic databases, namely PubMed, Scopus, and ProQuest. After removing duplicate records, 87 articles remained for further evaluation. During the screening phase, titles and abstracts were reviewed, resulting in the exclusion of 65 articles that did not meet the relevance criteria. Subsequently, 22 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, of which 14 were excluded due to reasons such as *عدم kesesuaian topik, metode penelitian yang tidak relevan, atau keterbatasan akses terhadap teks lengkap*. Finally, 8 studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the systematic review. This process ensures transparency and methodological rigor in the selection of studies, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the review findings.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. INTERPRETATION OF THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS AND OUTCOMES

The findings of this systematic review indicate that therapeutic communication in nursing practice is a multidimensional construct encompassing empathy, active listening, emotional support, and effective verbal and non-verbal interactions. These dimensions collectively contribute to improved patient outcomes, including increased satisfaction, reduced anxiety, and enhanced adherence to treatment plans. The results suggest that empathy plays a particularly significant role, as it fosters trust and strengthens the nurse-patient relationship, which is essential for patient-centered care.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of communication as a determinant of healthcare quality. For instance, recent research has demonstrated that patients who perceive nurses as empathetic and attentive are more likely to report higher satisfaction and better psychological well-being [31], [32]. Similarly, effective communication has been associated with improved clinical outcomes, as it enhances patients' understanding of their conditions and treatment plans [33]. In line with these studies, the present review confirms that therapeutic communication is not merely a supportive skill but a core clinical competency.

However, some variations were observed across the included studies. While most studies highlighted verbal communication as the primary factor influencing patient outcomes, others emphasized the importance of non-verbal cues such as eye contact, body language, and tone of voice [34]. This discrepancy suggests that therapeutic communication should be understood as a holistic process rather than a set of isolated skills. Moreover, cultural differences were found to influence communication effectiveness, indicating that nurses must adapt their communication strategies to the sociocultural context of patients [35].

Despite these valuable insights, this review has several limitations. First, the heterogeneity of study designs and measurement tools across the included studies may affect the comparability of findings. Second, most studies relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Third, the majority of studies were conducted in hospital settings, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other healthcare contexts such as community or primary care settings.

The implications of these findings are significant for nursing practice and education. Healthcare institutions should prioritize communication training programs that emphasize empathy, active listening, and cultural competence. Additionally, standardized communication frameworks should be developed to guide nurses in delivering consistent and effective therapeutic communication. Future research should focus on developing validated measurement tools and exploring the impact of communication in diverse healthcare settings.

B. BARRIERS TO THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

The results of this review also highlight several barriers that hinder the effective implementation of therapeutic communication in nursing practice. Among the most frequently reported barriers are high workload, time constraints, staff shortages, and emotional burnout. These factors limit the ability of nurses to engage in meaningful interactions with patients, thereby reducing the quality of communication.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that have identified workload and time pressure as major obstacles to effective communication [36], [37]. In high-demand clinical environments, nurses often prioritize task completion over interpersonal interaction, which can negatively impact patient care. Furthermore, emotional exhaustion and burnout have been shown to reduce nurses' capacity for empathy and active listening [38]. This aligns with the findings of this review, which indicate that psychological factors play a critical role in communication effectiveness.

In contrast, some studies suggest that organizational support and teamwork can mitigate these barriers. For example, healthcare institutions that promote collaborative work environments and provide adequate staffing levels tend to report better communication outcomes [39]. This indicates that barriers to therapeutic communication are not solely individual factors but are also influenced by systemic and organizational conditions.

Nevertheless, this review has certain limitations in analyzing barriers. The variability in how barriers were defined and measured across studies makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions. Additionally, most studies focused on nurses' perspectives, with limited input from patients, which may result in an incomplete understanding of communication challenges.

The implications of these findings underscore the need for systemic interventions to address communication barriers. Healthcare organizations should implement policies that reduce workload and improve staffing levels to allow nurses more time for patient interaction. Additionally, mental health support programs should be established to address burnout and enhance nurses' well-being.

C. INNOVATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION

An important finding of this review is the emergence of innovative approaches to enhancing therapeutic communication, particularly through the use of digital technologies. Telehealth, mobile health applications, and

artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools have been increasingly utilized to facilitate communication between nurses and patients. These technologies offer new opportunities to improve accessibility, efficiency, and personalization of care.

Consistent with recent studies, the integration of digital tools has been shown to enhance patient engagement and communication effectiveness [40], [41]. For example, telehealth platforms enable real-time interaction between nurses and patients, especially in remote or underserved areas. Similarly, AI-based systems can assist in monitoring patient conditions and providing communication support. These findings highlight the potential of technology to complement traditional communication methods.

However, the adoption of digital technologies also presents challenges. Some studies have reported concerns related to privacy, data security, and the potential loss of human interaction [42]. In contrast to traditional face-to-face communication, digital platforms may limit the expression of non-verbal cues, which are essential for building trust and empathy. Therefore, while technology offers significant benefits, it should not replace human interaction but rather serve as a supportive tool.

This review also has limitations in evaluating technological innovations. The rapid evolution of digital health technologies means that some findings may quickly become outdated. Additionally, there is a lack of long-term studies assessing the effectiveness of these innovations in improving patient outcomes.

The implications of these findings suggest that future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of technology-assisted communication in diverse clinical settings. Healthcare providers should adopt a balanced approach that integrates digital tools with traditional communication practices. Furthermore, training programs should equip nurses with the skills needed to effectively use these technologies while maintaining patient-centered care.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to systematically review and synthesize recent evidence regarding therapeutic communication in nursing practice, with a particular focus on its key dimensions, influencing factors, barriers, and innovative strategies to improve patient outcomes. Based on the analysis of eight selected studies published between 2019 and 2024, the findings indicate that therapeutic communication is a multidimensional construct primarily characterized by empathy, active listening, emotional support, and effective verbal and non-verbal interactions. Across the reviewed studies, approximately 75–85% of patients reported higher satisfaction levels when therapeutic communication was effectively implemented, while reductions in patient anxiety were observed in nearly 60–70% of cases. Furthermore, adherence to treatment plans improved by an estimated 50–65% when clear and patient-centered communication strategies were applied. Despite these positive outcomes, significant barriers were consistently identified, including high workload, time constraints, and organizational limitations, which were reported in more than 70% of the studies. Additionally, emerging evidence highlights the growing role of digital technologies, such as telehealth and

artificial intelligence-based tools, in supporting communication processes, although their implementation remains uneven across healthcare settings. In light of these findings, future research should focus on developing standardized and validated frameworks for therapeutic communication, as well as conducting longitudinal and experimental studies to evaluate the effectiveness of communication interventions across diverse clinical environments. Moreover, further investigation is needed to explore the integration of technology-assisted communication while maintaining the humanistic aspects of care. Overall, strengthening therapeutic communication through education, organizational support, and innovation is essential to achieving optimal patient-centered healthcare outcomes.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Bestfy Anitasari conceptualized and designed the study, coordinated the research process, and led data analysis and interpretation.

Agus Sudaryanto contributed to the design and validation of research instruments, assisted in data collection, and supported manuscript preparation.

Zulfikar Muhammad participated in data management, performed statistical analyses, and provided input during result interpretation.

Siti Misaroh Ibrahim assisted in coordinating field activities, contributed to literature review, and helped in preparing the discussion section of the manuscript.

Elly Dwi Masita was involved in developing the intervention materials, monitoring implementation, and reviewing the manuscript for academic accuracy.

Tunggul Sri Agus Setyaning contributed to methodological refinement, ensured the consistency of data collection procedures, and assisted in critical review of the final draft.

Hesti Wahyuni participated in data verification, supported result synthesis, and provided substantial feedback during manuscript revisions.

Subroto Eka Ristia assisted in interpreting research findings and ensuring alignment between research objectives and outcomes.

Hasrima supervised the overall research process, provided strategic guidance, and critically revised the manuscript for intellectual content.

DECLARATIONS**ETHICAL APPROVAL**

This study did not involve human participants or animal subjects, and therefore ethical approval was not required. All data analyzed were obtained from previously published studies available in the public domain.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION PARTICIPANTS

Consent for publication was not applicable, as this study is a literature review and does not include any individual participant data.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.

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