

Relationship of nurse therapeutic communication to inpatient satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Patient satisfaction is a key indicator of healthcare service quality. One of the most influential factors in determining patient satisfaction is the quality of communication between nurses and patients. As a purposeful and goal-oriented interaction, therapeutic communication plays a critical role in building trust, reducing anxiety, and improving patient outcomes. This study analyzes the relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction in a hospital setting.

Research Methodology: This research used a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 120 inpatients across medical and surgical wards in a general hospital. The instrument measured nurse therapeutic communication using a standardized scale and patient satisfaction using a validated satisfaction questionnaire. The data were analyzed using the Pearson correlation test and multiple linear regression to determine the strength and significance of the relationship.

Result: The study found a significant positive correlation between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis showed that therapeutic communication contributed to 46% of the variance in patient satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.46$). Empathy and active listening were the strongest predictors of patient satisfaction among the dimensions of therapeutic communication.

Conclusion: Therapeutic communication by nurses has a strong and significant relationship with inpatient satisfaction. Enhancing nurses' skills in empathetic interaction, active listening, and clear communication may improve overall patient experiences and satisfaction levels.

Keywords: Hospital Care, Inpatient Satisfaction, Nurse-Patient Interaction, Therapeutic Communication.



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INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is an essential indicator in assessing the quality of hospital health services. One of the factors that contributes significantly to patient satisfaction is the nurse's therapeutic communication (Doody *et al.*, 2025). Therapeutic communication includes interactions designed to improve the emotional and psychological well-being of the patient through a relationship of mutual trust and empathy between the nurse and the patient (MacKay *et al.*, 2024). Patient satisfaction is widely recognized as a critical indicator of the quality and effectiveness of healthcare services. It reflects the outcome of medical interventions and the patient's perception of their care, particularly regarding communication and interpersonal relationships with healthcare providers (Bassett *et al.*, 2025). Among healthcare professionals, nurses spend the most time with patients and thus have a unique opportunity to influence patient satisfaction through effective communication. Patient satisfaction has become a crucial metric in evaluating the quality of healthcare services globally (Shin and Yoo, 2023). In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the technical aspects of care and the interpersonal dynamics between healthcare providers and patients. Among these, particularly therapeutic communication by nurses plays a pivotal role in shaping the overall patient experience (Arda and Suprpto, 2023).

Effective therapeutic communication by nurses can significantly improve patient satisfaction (Rayani, 2024). Good therapeutic communication is positively associated with inpatient satisfaction levels. Patients who receive effective therapeutic communication from nurses report higher satisfaction with the services received (Bergoug, Fiorentino, and Rodrigues, 2024). Therapeutic communication is the purposeful use of communication to build and maintain helping relationships with patients. It includes verbal and non-verbal interactions such as active listening, empathy, clarification, and encouragement (Zarei, Negarandeh, and Neshat, 2024). These interactions foster trust, reduce patient anxiety, and improve emotional well-being, which are essential during the stressful period of hospitalization. Recent studies have emphasized that nurse-patient communication is not merely a procedural aspect of care but a therapeutic tool that contributes directly to clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction (Caner *et al.*, 2025). Inadequate or impersonal communication can lead to misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, and even decreased adherence to treatment regimens. On the contrary, therapeutic communication can empower patients, make them feel heard, and enhance their overall hospital experience (Chen *et al.*, 2023). Therapeutic communication is a purposeful, goal-directed interaction that improves patients' physical and emotional well-being. It involves active listening, empathy, respect, and clarity in conveying information, collectively fostering trust and comfort in the nurse-patient relationship (Özaras ÖZ and Onarici, 2025). Effective communication is especially vital in inpatient settings, where patients are often in vulnerable conditions and highly dependent on nursing care for their recovery. Communication in nursing is called therapeutic communication, which is a way of fostering a therapeutic relationship between nurses and patients that has the aim of helping in the patient's healing process (Yang *et al.*, 2025).

Given its significance, improving the therapeutic communication skills of nurses has become a strategic focus in many healthcare institutions worldwide. However, the relationship between therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction remains underexplored in some clinical settings, especially in low- to middle-income countries where nurse workloads are often high, and communication training may be limited. While

evidence supports a link between nurse therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction, more research is still needed to understand how therapeutic communication affects patient satisfaction in various healthcare contexts. This study aims to analyze the relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction in a hospital setting to provide evidence-based insights for improving the quality of care through enhanced communication practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction. A cross-sectional approach was chosen to allow data collection at a single point in time, enabling efficient analysis of correlation patterns between the variables.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in a general hospital, involving inpatients from medical and surgical wards. Inclusion criteria included patients aged 18 years and above, admitted for at least 3 days, and able to communicate verbally and provide informed consent. Patients in critical condition or with cognitive impairments were excluded. One hundred twenty patients were selected using proportional stratified random sampling to ensure a balanced representation across wards.

Data Collection Instruments

Two validated instruments were used in this study:

Nurse Therapeutic Communication Scale. This questionnaire was adapted from the Therapeutic Communication Competency Scale (TCCS), which includes dimensions such as empathy, active listening, respect, and clarity. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire Adapted from the Patient Satisfaction with Nursing Care Quality Questionnaire (PSNCQQ), this instrument measures satisfaction across communication, responsiveness, and emotional support. It also uses a 5-point Likert scale. Both instruments were tested for reliability and validity in a pilot study involving 20 patients, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over four weeks, from November to December. After obtaining ethical clearance from the hospital's ethics committee and written informed consent from participants, trained data collectors administered the questionnaires through face-to-face interviews to ensure clarity and completeness of responses.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency) were used to summarize patient demographics and variable scores. The relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction was analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to identify the most influential components of therapeutic communication in predicting patient satisfaction. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval. All participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses and had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence to their care.

RESULT

Table 1 Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	41	34.2
Female	79	65.8
Ward		
Medical	66	55.0
Surgical	54	45.0
Age (mean $\pm$ SD)		42.5 $\pm$ 12.3
Length of Stay (days)		6.2 $\pm$ 1.7

A total of 120 inpatients participated in this study. The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1. The majority were female (65.8%), with an average age of 42.5 $\pm$ 12.3 years. Most respondents were hospitalized in the medical ward (55%), and the average length of stay was 6.2 $\pm$ 1.7 days.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD	Min	Max
Therapeutic Communication	4.21 $\pm$ 0.45	3.1	5.0
Inpatient Satisfaction	4.09 $\pm$ 0.51	2.8	5.0

The mean score of nurse therapeutic communication was 4.21 $\pm$ 0.45, indicating a high level of perceived communication quality. The mean score of inpatient satisfaction was 4.09 $\pm$ 0.51, reflecting a generally high satisfaction level among respondents. The Pearson product-moment correlation test revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that higher-quality communication is associated with greater patient satisfaction.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Predictor (Communication Component)	β (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Empathy	0.38	4.21	<0.001
Active Listening	0.29	3.55	0.001
Clarity of Information	0.21	2.18	0.032
Respect	0.15	1.67	0.098

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine which dimensions of therapeutic communication most significantly influenced patient satisfaction. The model was statistically significant ($F(4, 115) = 22.7$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 46% of the variance in inpatient satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.46$). Empathy and active listening were the strongest and most significant predictors of patient satisfaction, followed by clarity of information. While positively related, the respect variable was not statistically significant in this model.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction. This result reinforces the concept that patients value not only the clinical competence of healthcare providers but also the emotional and interpersonal quality of care they receive. The better the therapeutic communication carried out by the nurse, the higher the patient's

satisfaction (Pasere *et al.*, 2025). Effective communication improves patients' positive experiences and perceptions of health services (Shaqiqi, Smith, and Shaqiqi, 2024). Empathy and active listening emerged as the strongest predictors of patient satisfaction among the therapeutic communication components (Finley *et al.*, 2024). This finding aligns with prior studies suggesting that empathetic behavior fosters trust, emotional comfort, and perceived care quality. When nurses demonstrate genuine concern and attentively listen to patients' needs, patients are more likely to feel heard, respected, and satisfied with their overall care experience (Peter *et al.*, 2024). Most patients assessed that nurses have shown empathy, good listening skills, and clear and easy-to-understand communication. Patients feel safer, understood, and valued when nurses demonstrate therapeutic communication competencies. Therapeutic communication towards decreasing anxiety levels in preoperative patients (Mercan and Mersin, 2025). Through a deeper understanding of the role of therapeutic communication in caring for preoperative patients, we can improve the quality of health care and patient well-being (Gustini *et al.*, 2023).

The role of clarity in information delivery also showed a statistically significant contribution to satisfaction, albeit to a lesser degree (Mehralian *et al.*, 2024). Clear communication ensures that patients understand their health conditions, treatment plans, and expectations, which reduces anxiety and enhances their involvement in care decisions (Yıldırım, Güner, and İnci, 2024). On the other hand, though positively correlated, respect was not a statistically significant predictor in the regression model. This could suggest that while respect is fundamental, it may be perceived as a basic expectation and less influential when isolated from other relational behaviors such as empathy or active listening (Oakley and Ream, 2024). Participants generally felt positive communication from nurses. However, the variation in scores shows room for improvement, especially in the consistency of communication across nurses and shifts. Several factors may contribute to the effectiveness of therapeutic communication, including nurse workload, communication training, patient cultural background, and environmental factors within the ward. Time constraints and emotional exhaustion may limit nurses' engagement in deeper, patient-centered conversations (Paiva *et al.*, 2025). Addressing these barriers through training, staffing adjustments, and supportive policies can enhance the consistency and quality of therapeutic interactions. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence that supports the integration of communication training into nursing education and in-service programs. By prioritizing therapeutic communication as a core competency, healthcare institutions can improve patient satisfaction, foster better clinical relationships, and potentially improve patient outcomes (Yıldız Çelik *et al.*, 2024).

Empathy and the ability to listen actively are the two most dominant components that affect patient satisfaction (Choi, Kim, and Yoo, 2025). This shows that the emotional aspect of communication has a more significant impact than the technical or informative aspect (Gürçan *et al.*, 2025). When the nurse shows empathy, the patient feels understood and cared for personally, not just as an object of service. Active listening skills also allow patients to express their feelings, concerns, and expectations, thus strengthening the therapeutic relationship between patients and caregivers (Al Khatib and Ndiaye, 2025). Meanwhile, although the "respect" dimension positively correlated with patient satisfaction, it did not significantly influence the regression model. This may be due to the patient's perception that appreciation is something that health workers should have,

so it is not the primary determinant of satisfaction unless it is explicitly shown. Patients often perceive professional behaviors such as respect as normative (Lee and Yoo, 2024).

The results of this study support the theory of interpersonal relationships in nursing, such as Hildegard Peplau's Interpersonal Theory, which emphasizes the importance of therapeutic relationships in the healing process of patients. Effective communication facilitates the exchange of information and builds a deep emotional connection between nurse and patient, ultimately impacting the satisfaction and success of therapy (Darko, Senoo-Dogbey, and Ohene, 2024). However, this study has some limitations. First, the cross-sectional design only captures data at a time, so it cannot describe the causal relationship between variables. Second, using self-report questionnaires opens the possibility of subjective bias from respondents. Therapeutic communication has a significant role in the context of hospitalization (Aliafsari Mamaghani, Soleimani, and Zirak, 2025). Nonetheless, obstacles such as high workload and limited time are still challenges in consistently applying therapeutic communication (López-Panza *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, hospital management is advised to conduct regular communication training for nurses, ensure adequate time for interaction with patients, and integrate therapeutic communication into nursing service quality indicators. This study emphasizes that therapeutic communication is an essential component in nursing services that must be continuously developed and strengthened through communication skills training, routine supervision, and integration into nursing service operational standards.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

Hospitals must strengthen therapeutic communication training for nurses, especially in developing empathy and active listening skills. Therapeutic communication should be part of the quality indicators of nursing services and monitored periodically through patient feedback. These findings enrich the nursing literature on the importance of humanistic aspects in service. This research supports the theory of interpersonal relationships in nursing (such as Hildegard Peplau's theory), emphasizing communication as the core of the nursing process. Follow-up research is recommended using a longitudinal design involving more than one health institution and incorporating nurse perspectives and third-party observations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of therapeutic communication practices in the field.

CONCLUSION

This study shows a strong and significant relationship between nurses' therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction. The higher the quality of therapeutic communication the nurse provides, especially in empathy and active listening, the higher the patient satisfaction with the services received. Therapeutic communication is a means of conveying information and plays an essential role in building a trusting relationship between nurses and patients. Therefore, improving therapeutic communication skills should be prioritized in developing nurses' competencies through formal training and regular clinical supervision. This study suggests that hospital management pays more attention to implementing therapeutic communication in the clinical environment to improve the quality of nursing services and patient satisfaction.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no potential conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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