

The Relationship Between Nurses' Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication and Patient Satisfaction In The Inpatient Ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Regional General Hospital Kudus

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Abstract .

Patient satisfaction is an important indicator of healthcare quality and is strongly influenced by nurses' therapeutic communication. Effective verbal and nonverbal communication can strengthen nurse patient relationships, improve patient trust, and enhance satisfaction with nursing services. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between nurses' verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication and inpatient satisfaction at RSUD dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus. This quantitative study employed a cross sectional design. The study population consisted of 14,410 inpatients, and 389 respondents were selected using simple random sampling based on the Slovin formula. Data were collected using questionnaires measuring respondent characteristics, verbal therapeutic communication, nonverbal therapeutic communication, and patient satisfaction. Instrument validity and reliability were confirmed before data collection. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Chi Square test with a significance level of 0.05. The results showed that 47.6% of respondents assessed both verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication as good, while 48.8% reported being satisfied with inpatient services. Chi Square analysis demonstrated a significant relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction ($p = 0.000$), with a contingency coefficient of 0.797 indicating a very strong association. These findings suggest that effective therapeutic communication contributes substantially to improving patient satisfaction. Strengthening nurses' communication competencies should therefore become an important strategy for enhancing the quality of nursing care.

Keywords: *Communication Skills, Inpatient Care, Nurse-Patient Communication, Patient Satisfaction and Therapeutic Communication.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Hospitals are healthcare institutions responsible for providing quality, safe, effective, and patient-centered care. In modern healthcare, patient satisfaction is a key indicator of service quality because it demonstrates the extent to which the service received meets patient expectations [1], [2]. Patient satisfaction plays a crucial role in increasing trust in healthcare professionals, encouraging adherence to therapy, and supporting a successful healing process. Conversely, patient dissatisfaction can impact the hospital's image and lower the public's assessment of the quality of nursing care [3]. Therefore, nurses are required not only to possess clinical competence but also to be able to build humanistic relationships through effective and empathetic communication.

Communication is an essential component in the nursing process because it is the primary medium in building a therapeutic relationship between nurses and patients [4]. One form of professional communication that plays an important role is therapeutic communication, namely communication that is consciously planned, oriented towards the patient's needs, and aims to help patients achieve optimal health conditions through relationships based on mutual trust and empathy [5]. Therapeutic communication consists of verbal and nonverbal communication that complement each other. Verbal communication is realized through the delivery of clear information, the use of easily understood language, and appropriate intonation, while nonverbal communication is reflected through facial expressions, eye contact, body posture, movements, and therapeutic touch that show attention and concern for the patient [6], [7], [8]. The congruence between verbal and nonverbal communication will strengthen interpersonal relationships, create a sense of security, reduce patient anxiety, and increase satisfaction with nursing services [9].

Various studies have shown that therapeutic communication has a significant relationship with patient satisfaction. Previous research reported that the better the therapeutic communication implemented by nurses, the higher the level of patient satisfaction with nursing services [10]. Other studies also show that nonverbal

communication, such as eye contact, smiling, and empathetic expressions, contribute significantly to shaping patients' positive perceptions of nurse professionalism [11]. These findings are reinforced by research showing a significant relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction during hospitalization, so that therapeutic communication functions not only as a medium for conveying information, but also as a means of building a positive service experience for patients.

However, the implementation of therapeutic communication in nursing practice is not yet fully optimal. The results of a preliminary survey conducted at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in October 2025 on ten inpatients showed that 60% of patients stated that nurses had not provided complete explanations before performing nursing procedures, 30% of patients assessed that nurses did not show friendly expressions or eye contact during interactions, and 10% of patients felt that nurses communicated in a rushed manner. These conditions indicate that the application of verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication still needs to be improved because it has the potential to reduce patient trust, comfort, and satisfaction with the services received [12]. In addition, previous studies generally still assess therapeutic communication in general without specifically separating verbal and nonverbal communication aspects, and were mostly conducted in teaching hospitals or large hospitals so they do not fully reflect the conditions of regional hospitals such as Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication of nurses and the level of satisfaction of inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital. This research is important because it is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the contribution of therapeutic communication to patient satisfaction as a basis for evaluating and improving the quality of nursing services in hospitals. The novelty of this study lies in the analysis of therapeutic communication separated into verbal and nonverbal communication aspects and its testing on inpatients at a regional hospital. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the contribution of each form of communication to patient satisfaction so that it can serve as a basis for developing strategies to improve the quality of nursing services.

II. METHODS

This study used a quantitative method with a cross-sectional approach, namely a research design that measures independent variables and dependent variables at the same time so that the relationship between variables can be analyzed based on the condition of the respondents at the time of the study [13]. The independent variables in this study were verbal therapeutic communication and nonverbal therapeutic communication of nurses, while the dependent variable was the level of satisfaction of inpatients. The study was conducted in the Inpatient Ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital with the implementation of the study starting from the planning stage in November 2025. This approach was chosen because it was in accordance with the research objective, namely to analyze the relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication of nurses with the level of satisfaction of inpatients.

The study population was all inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital, totaling 14,410 patients in the past year [14]. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, resulting in a sample of 389 respondents [14]. The sampling technique used simple random sampling, meaning each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be selected as a research respondent. The inclusion criteria for the study included inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital, willing to be respondents, and having a *compos mentis* level of consciousness, while the exclusion criteria included uncooperative and unconscious patients [14].

The research instrument used a questionnaire adapted from Marbun's (2022) research. The instrument consists of four parts, namely the respondent characteristics questionnaire, a verbal therapeutic communication questionnaire consisting of 15 statements, a nonverbal therapeutic communication questionnaire consisting of 15 statements, and a patient satisfaction questionnaire consisting of 25 statements. The assessment of verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication used a three-category Likert scale, namely always with a score of 3, rarely with a score of 2, and never with a score of 1, while patient satisfaction was measured using a four-category Likert scale, namely very satisfied with a score of 4, satisfied with a score of 3, dissatisfied with a

score of 2, and very dissatisfied with a score of 1. Therapeutic communication categories are divided into good if they obtain a score of more than 75%, sufficient if they obtain a score of 45% to 74%, and poor if they obtain a score of less than 45%. Meanwhile, patient satisfaction is categorized as satisfied with a score of 77 to 100, quite satisfied with a score of 51 to 76, and dissatisfied with a score of 25 to 50. Before being used, the instrument was tested for validity to determine the ability of the question items to measure the research variables and was tested for reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with the instrument being declared reliable if it has a minimum reliability value of 0.70 and is positive [13].

The research procedure begins with determining the research topic, preparing a proposal, and processing research permits from Muhammadiyah University of Kudus and Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional General Hospital [14]. After obtaining research permits, the researcher conducted a preliminary study to obtain supporting data, then collected data by distributing questionnaires to inpatients who met the research criteria. Next, editing, coding, scoring, and tabulating were carried out on all collected data before statistical analysis was conducted [14].

Data analysis was conducted using univariate and bivariate methods [14]. Univariate analysis was used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of each research variable in the form of frequency distribution and percentage. Bivariate analysis used the Chi Square test with a significance level of 0.05 to analyze the relationship between verbal therapeutic communication and nonverbal therapeutic communication with the level of satisfaction of inpatients. The Chi Square test was chosen because all research variables were categorical, the data were presented in the form of contingency tables, the respondents were independent, and this test did not require the assumption of normal distribution [13].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics Based on Age, Gender, Education, and Occupation at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026 (n=389)

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
16–30 years	40	10.3
31–45 years	125	32.1
46–54 years	145	37.3
>55 years	79	20.3
Gender		
Man	175	45.0
Woman	214	55.0
Education		
Elementary School	14	3.6
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	47	12.1
High School/Vocational School	277	71.2
D3/S1	51	13.1
Work		
Laborer	85	21.9
civil servant	52	13.4
Private	118	30.3
Self-employed	92	23.7
Farmer	42	10.8
Total Respondents	389	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Based on Table 1, it is known that of the 389 respondents, almost half were aged 46–54 years, namely 145 respondents (37.3%), most were female, namely 214 respondents (55.0%), almost all had a high school/vocational high school education, namely 277 respondents (71.2%), and almost a third worked as private employees, namely 118 respondents (30.3%).

Analysis Univariate

1. Communication Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutics of Inpatient Nurses at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026

Table 2. Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication of Inpatient Nurses at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026 (n=389))

Variables	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Verbal Therapeutic Communication	Not enough	41	10.5
	Enough	163	41.9
	Good	185	47.6
	Total	389	100.0
Non-Verbal Therapeutic Communication	Not enough	41	10.5
	Enough	163	41.9
	Good	185	47.6
	Total	389	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Based on Table 2, it is known that of the 389 respondents, almost half of them rated the nurses' verbal therapeutic communication in the good category, namely 185 respondents (47.6%), followed by the sufficient category of 163 respondents (41.9%), while a small portion rated the verbal therapeutic communication in the poor category, namely 41 respondents (10.5%). Based on the nurses' non-verbal therapeutic communication, almost half rated the non-verbal therapeutic communication in the good category, namely 185 respondents (47.6%), followed by the sufficient category of 163 respondents (41.9%), while a small portion rated the non-verbal therapeutic communication in the poor category, namely 41 respondents (10.5%). Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents rated the nurses' verbal and non-verbal therapeutic communication as being in the good category.

2. Patient Satisfaction Level at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital

Table 3. Level of Satisfaction of Inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital

Variables	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Patient Satisfaction	Not satisfied	49	12.6
	Quite satisfied	150	38.6
	Satisfied	190	48.8
	Total	389	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2026.

Based on Table 3, it is known that of the 389 respondents, almost half of them have a level of satisfaction in the satisfied category, namely 190 respondents (48.8%), followed by the fairly satisfied category of 150 respondents (38.6%), while a small number of respondents stated that they were dissatisfied, namely 49 respondents (12.6%). Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents were satisfied with the services provided in the inpatient ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital.

3. The Relationship Between Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication of Nurses and the Level of Satisfaction of Inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital

Table 4. Relationship between Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication of Nurses and the Level of Satisfaction of Inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital

Variables	Category	Dissatisfied n (%)	Quite Satisfied n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Total n (%)	r (CC)	p-value
Verbal Therapeutic Communication	Not enough	41 (83.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	41 (10.5)	0.797	0,000
	Enough	8 (16.3)	150 (100.0)	5 (2.6)	163 (41.9)		
	Good	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	185 (97.4)	185 (47.6)		
Non-Verbal Therapeutic Communication	Not enough	41 (83.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	41 (10.5)	0.797	0,000
	Enough	8 (16.3)	150 (100.0)	5 (2.6)	163 (41.9)		
	Good	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	185 (97.4)	185 (47.6)		

Source: *Primary Data, 2026.*

Based on Table 4, it is known that in verbal therapeutic communication, most respondents who rated the nurse's verbal therapeutic communication in the good category were satisfied with the service, namely 185 respondents (97.4%), while respondents who rated the verbal therapeutic communication in the less category mostly felt dissatisfied, namely 41 respondents (83.7%). In non-verbal therapeutic communication, most respondents who rated the nurse's non-verbal therapeutic communication in the good category also felt satisfied with the service, namely 185 respondents (97.4%), while respondents who rated the non-verbal therapeutic communication in the less category mostly felt dissatisfied, namely 41 respondents (83.7%). The results of the Chi-Square test showed that both verbal therapeutic communication and non-verbal therapeutic communication had a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) so that H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. This shows that there is a significant relationship between verbal therapeutic communication and non-verbal therapeutic communication of nurses with patient satisfaction in the inpatient ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital. The contingency coefficient (CC) value of 0.797 indicates that the relationship between the two variables and patient satisfaction is in the very strong category.

IV. DISCUSSION

Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication of Inpatient Nurses at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026

Based on Table 2, it is known that of the 389 respondents, the majority rated the nurses' therapeutic communication as good (185 respondents (47.6%)), followed by 163 respondents (41.9%) in the adequate category, and 41 respondents (10.5%) in the poor category. These results indicate that nearly half of the patients experienced effective therapeutic communication during their treatment. However, the still high proportion of the adequate category indicates that the quality of therapeutic communication is not yet fully optimal and still requires improvement so that all patients receive a better service experience.

Therapeutic communication is professional communication that aims to help the patient's healing process through verbal and nonverbal communication [11] [7]. Verbal communication is carried out through the delivery of information, education, and providing opportunities for questions, while nonverbal communication is demonstrated through eye contact, facial expressions, body posture, therapeutic touch, and intonation that reflects empathy. The results of this study are in line with Rahmawati et al. (2023), and Wulandari and Putri (2024) who stated that clear, empathetic, and effective communication increases patient trust and positive perceptions of service quality. Conversely, Wei et al. (2022) and McKenna et al. (2021) explain that high workloads and ineffective communication can reduce the quality of the therapeutic relationship and patient satisfaction.

The results of the respondent characteristics analysis showed that age, gender, education level, and occupation were related to verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication. Age was related to verbal ($p=0.031$) and nonverbal ($p=0.041$) communication, with the 31–40 age group most likely to rate communication as good. Gender was also related to therapeutic communication ($p=0.039$), with female respondents more likely to rate nurse communication as good than male respondents. Furthermore, education showed the most significant relationship ($p=0.000$), while occupation was also related to therapeutic communication ($p=0.038$). These results indicate that patient characteristics influence how patients receive, understand, and assess therapeutic communication provided by nurses. This is supported by research by Rahmawati et al. (2023) which states that age and education level influence patients' ability to understand health information, while women tend to be more sensitive to aspects of empathy and interpersonal communication. Research by Alshammari et al. (2023) also explains that occupation influences patients' experiences, interaction patterns, and expectations regarding health services. According to Potter et al. (2023), effective therapeutic communication must be adapted to the individual characteristics of the patient because each patient has a different ability to receive information, emotional needs, and perceptions of verbal and nonverbal communication provided by the nurse.

According to the researchers, the predominance of the good category indicates that most nurses have implemented therapeutic communication in accordance with nursing service standards. However, the large

number of sufficient categories indicates that communication skills are not evenly distributed across nurses and in service situations, which can be influenced by workload, time constraints, and the complexity of patient conditions. Therefore, regular therapeutic communication training, improvement of active listening and empathy skills, and evaluation of service quality are needed to ensure verbal and nonverbal communication becomes more effective and can improve patient satisfaction.

Patient Satisfaction Level of Inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026

Based on Table 3, it is known that of the 389 respondents, almost half of them were satisfied (190 respondents (48.8%)), followed by the quite satisfied category (150 respondents (38.6%)), while 49 respondents (12.6%) stated that they were dissatisfied. These results indicate that the majority of patients were satisfied with the services in the inpatient ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital. However, the still high proportion of patients who were quite satisfied indicates that the quality of service has not fully met the expectations of all patients, so efforts are still needed to improve the quality of service.

Patient satisfaction is a feeling that arises after comparing the service received with expectations [6]. In nursing care, satisfaction is influenced by service quality, therapeutic communication, empathy, appropriateness of action, and the implementation of patient-centered care [11]. The results of this study align with Pratiwi et al. (2022) who stated that fast, communicative, responsive service, and an empathetic attitude can increase patient satisfaction. Conversely, limited communication, waiting times, and high workloads of healthcare workers can decrease patient satisfaction (Wei et al., 2022; Abdelrahman et al., 2023).

The analysis results showed that respondent characteristics were related to patient satisfaction levels. Age was significantly associated with patient satisfaction ($p=0.012$), with the 31–40 age group reporting the highest satisfaction (38.9%). Gender was also significantly associated with patient satisfaction ($p=0.017$), with female respondents reporting more satisfaction than male respondents. Education level showed the most significant correlation ($p=0.000$), while occupation was also significantly associated with patient satisfaction ($p=0.034$). These results indicate that patient characteristics influence their perceptions of the quality of care received. These findings align with research by Pratiwi et al. (2022) which states that age and education level influence patients' ability to understand service information, thus influencing satisfaction levels. Research by Suryani et al. (2023) also explains that women tend to pay more attention to aspects of communication, empathy, and attention from healthcare workers when assessing services, while Suwandi et al. (2024) found that occupational type influences patients' expectations and perceptions of the quality of healthcare services. According to Kotler and Keller (2022), patient satisfaction is formed from a comparison between the services received and patient expectations, so that individual characteristics such as age, gender, education, and occupation will influence expectations, how to receive information, and assessments of the quality of services provided by health workers.

According to the researchers, the dominant category of satisfaction indicates that nursing services at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital have been able to meet the expectations of most patients, especially through friendly service, good communication, and appropriate nursing actions. However, the still large category of quite satisfied indicates that the quality of service is not evenly distributed across all aspects, so the hospital needs to continue to improve therapeutic communication, service responsiveness, and regular quality evaluations to optimize patient satisfaction.

The Relationship Between Verbal and Nonverbal Therapeutic Communication of Nurses and the Satisfaction Level of Inpatients at Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional Hospital in 2026

Based on Table 4, it is known that the majority of respondents who rated the nurse's verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication in the good category felt satisfied with the service, namely 185 respondents (97.4%), while respondents who rated the therapeutic communication in the less category mostly felt dissatisfied as many as 41 respondents (83.7%). The results of the Chi-Square test showed a p -value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), so there is a significant relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication with patient satisfaction. The contingency coefficient (CC) value of 0.797 indicates that the relationship is in the very strong category, which means that the better the therapeutic communication provided by the nurse, the higher the level of patient satisfaction.

Therapeutic communication is professional communication that aims to build a relationship of mutual trust, provide information, reduce anxiety, and involve patients in the treatment process through verbal and nonverbal communication [11] [7]. According to Kotler and Keller (2022), patient satisfaction is formed when the service received meets or exceeds expectations, where communication is one of the main components that influences the perception of service quality. The results of this study are in line with Suryani et al. (2023) who stated that clear, empathetic, responsive, and patient-centered therapeutic communication is significantly related to increased patient satisfaction.

Research by Suwandi, Rusnoto, et al. (2024) also supports this study by showing that all dimensions of service quality, particularly responsiveness and empathy, are significantly related to BPJS patient satisfaction ($p < 0.05$). Fast, responsive, communicative, and empathetic service has been shown to increase patient satisfaction. These findings align with the results of this study, which showed a very strong relationship between therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction ($p = 0.000$; correlation coefficient = 0.797), making therapeutic communication a crucial factor in improving patient satisfaction in inpatient wards.

According to researchers, the strong relationship between therapeutic communication and patient satisfaction indicates that the success of nursing care is determined not only by clinical actions, but also by the nurse's ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally. Patients who receive easy-to-understand explanations, the opportunity to express complaints, and the attention and empathy shown by nurses will feel more comfortable, confident, and satisfied with the care they receive. Therefore, improving therapeutic communication competency through training, supervision, and regular evaluation is necessary to continuously improve the quality of nursing care and patient satisfaction.

V. CONCLUSION

This study shows that verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication of nurses in the inpatient ward of Dr. Loekmono Hadi Kudus Regional General Hospital are generally in the good category, while the patient satisfaction level is dominated by the satisfied category. The results of the bivariate analysis showed a significant relationship between verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication with patient satisfaction ($p = 0.000$), with a contingency coefficient value of 0.797 indicating a very strong relationship. This finding indicates that the better the nurse's ability to convey information clearly, provide attention, show empathy, and build effective interpersonal communication, the higher the level of patient satisfaction with the nursing services received during treatment in the hospital.

This study has limitations due to its cross-sectional design, which means the relationships obtained cannot explain causality. Furthermore, the study was conducted in only one hospital, thus limiting the generalizability of the results to other healthcare facilities. Future research is recommended to use a longitudinal or mixed methods design with a wider hospital coverage and include other factors such as nurse workload, organizational culture, communication competency, and service quality to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the factors influencing patient satisfaction. The practical implications of this study suggest that hospitals need to improve therapeutic communication competency through ongoing training, supervision, performance evaluation, and strengthening a patient-centered service culture to optimize the quality of nurses' verbal and nonverbal communication and improve service quality and patient satisfaction.

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