

The Effect of Therapeutic Communication on The Anxiety Level of The Elderly

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Abstract

Introduction: Anxiety disorders have a high incidence rate in the elderly, with the most significant factor being thinking about the disease they are suffering from. This requires therapeutic communication to build a nurse-patient relationship with the elderly to adapt to psychological disorders, including anxiety, to relieve and make elderly patients feel comfortable, ultimately speeding up their recovery. **Goals:** Aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of therapeutic communication in reducing anxiety levels in the elderly. **Method:** A review article was conducted based on research issues and methodology, with article searches using the PICO framework strategy using the Google Scholar, Springer, ResearchGate, and Semantic Scholar databases. **Results:** The results of the study show that anxiety is a common problem often experienced by the elderly during the aging process. Some factors that trigger anxiety in the elderly include health issues and a lack of social interaction due to death or relocation. The research indicates that therapeutic communication can help reduce anxiety levels in the elderly. Good therapeutic communication by healthcare professionals has a positive impact on reducing patient anxiety. **Discussion:** In this regard, the researcher highlights the importance of therapeutic communication in reducing anxiety in the elderly. Both verbal and nonverbal therapeutic communication is considered a key element in nursing care. Additionally, the researcher emphasizes the importance of adopting different approaches when applying therapeutic communication techniques to the elderly. Unstable emotional reactions and communication barriers pose specific challenges in interacting with the elderly.

Keywords: anxiety, elderly, therapeutic communication

Introduction

Anxiety is an adaptive emotion that is subjective to individuals. It functionally alerts individuals to threats and dangers, often accompanied by physical reactions. The symptoms of anxiety were positively associated with the utilization of healthcare services. This could occur due to several conditions, such as progressive chronic diseases, acute illnesses, surgical plans, unclear disease conditions, and more¹.

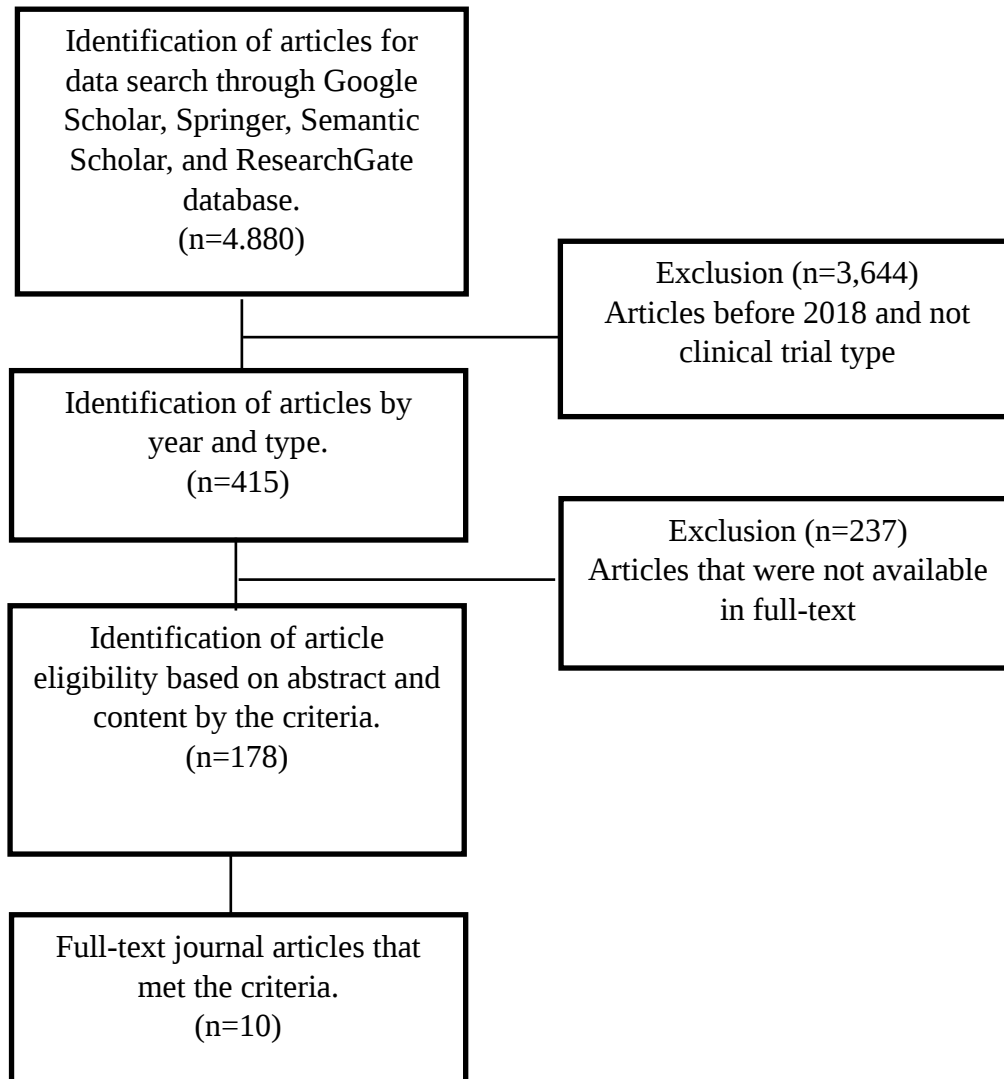
Elderly, defined by the United Nations, is a person who is over 60 years of age. But most families and communities also often use other referents to determine age, such as family status (grandparents), physical appearance, and any other social-cultural referent². Physical or biological decline is a normal process caused by aging and can result in decreased organ function in the elderly. Decreased organ function can disrupt health stability and cause disease susceptibility in the elderly³. Elderly people with cognitive decline can experience anxiety, restlessness, and social withdrawal, requiring special attention⁴. Although it has been reported that anxiety is more likely to occur in young adults, anxiety is not exclusive to this age group. It is essential to pay more attention to the negative impact of anxiety on the functioning and well-being of older adults. In the elderly, anxiety often manifests as a perception of poor health, reduced participation in physical activities, feelings of loneliness, dissatisfaction with life, and a lack of motivation to maintain good health¹.

Therapeutic communication is defined as communication between the patient and health care provider using verbal and non-verbal methods. The goal is to help patients improve their perceptions and apprehensions about their diagnosis and treatment options. Another ultimate goal of therapeutic communication is to help patients overcome some form of emotional or psychological distress, such as depression, stress, and anxiety⁵. Therapeutic communication is a practice carried out by professional nurses in interacting with patients to provide the support, information, and education that patients need. This communication involves planning and using certain technical elements, such as active listening techniques, asking open-ended questions, and providing constructive feedback. Nurses implement planned strategies in therapeutic communication to build relationships of mutual trust and empathy with patients,

enabling nurses to understand their client's needs and conditions in more depth. In therapeutic communication with patients, we not only have to develop strategies but, as professional nurses, we must carry out all actions honestly and sincerely and adjust nursing care to patients to reduce the patient's anxiety. Carrying out therapeutic communication, of course, aims to be a form of communication in healing the patient. A nurse's communication skills are very influential on a patient's recovery⁶. Nurses with good therapeutic communication skills will quickly build trusting relationships with patients, prevent ethical and legal problems, and increase professional satisfaction in nursing services⁷.

Method

Articles were prepared using the article review method. The article search used the PICO framework strategy. The population in this study is the "elderly" OR "aged," given a "therapeutic communication" OR "therapeutic nursing" intervention to determine the effect on the level of "anxiety" OR "social anxiety" OR "nervousness" they experience. Literature searches through Google Scholar, Springer, Semantic Scholar, and ResearchGate databases with keywords that MeSH has adjusted to get ten articles that match the criteria.



Results

Anxiety can also be included in mental disorders that often occur in the elderly due to factors in the process of getting old. If left unchecked, it can cause signs and symptoms such as fear, anxiety, insecurity, cold sweats, trembling, loss of appetite, and irregular heartbeat. Apart from the aging process, anxiety that occurs in the elderly can also be caused by several factors, such as health problems and lack of social interaction. This is evidenced by research by Baharuddin et al. (2023), that out of 60 elderly people, 12 (20.0%) elderly people experienced mild anxiety, and 48 (80.0%) elderly people experienced moderate anxiety⁸.

One of the efforts to overcome anxiety in the elderly is by implementing

therapeutic communication. This is in line with the research by Sukardin & Azamti (2019) that there is a significant difference in the level of anxiety of the elderly after being given therapeutic communication between the intervention group and the control group. The level of therapeutic communication carried out by health workers also has an effect, where which is in line with research by Ferawati et al. (2022) that the better the therapeutic communication value of the officer, the less the patient's anxiety level that shows a positive relationship¹⁰.

However, the level of anxiety in each person is different even though the problems faced are the same, so therapeutic communication alone has no effect. This aligns with the research by Larira et al. (2023) that there is no relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and patient anxiety¹¹. The respondents' characteristics can cause this, so even though the nurse has provided good therapeutic communication, some patients are still focused on their illness. This causes patients to feel still anxious, especially some patients who come to the hospital unaccompanied by family.

Table 1. Result of Literature Review

ID Num ber	Author and Journal Identity	Journal Title	Objective	Population and Sample	Method	Summary of Results
1.	Author: Siregar et al. (2021) Journal Identity: <i>British Journal of Nursing Studies</i> , 1(1), 13–19. https://doi.org/10.32996/bjns.2021.1.1.3	Therapeutic Communication Strategies in Nursing Process of Angry, Anxious, and Fearful Schizophrenic Patients ¹²	Determine the Therapeutic Communication of Nurses towards Patients.	25 respondents	Qualitative approach.	The study found that therapeutic communication strategies, such as cognitive therapy and family support, had a significant impact on the ability of patients with schizophrenia to control negative thoughts and emotions. However, it was noted that negative thoughts in patients with schizophrenia cannot be permanently eliminated in a short period. The study emphasized the importance of cognitive therapy and the involvement of family members in the treatment process for patients with schizophrenia.
A2	Author: Ferawati et al., (2022)	The Relationship Between	Examine the relationship between	Patients undergoing invasive	Quantitative descriptive correlational	The study found that there is a significant relationship between

	Journal Identity: <i>Jurnal Keperawatan Dan Fisioterapi (Jkf)</i> , 4(2), 172–179. https://doi.org/10.35451/jkf.v4i2.959	Therapeutic Communication With The Patient's Level of Anxiety Performed Thoracentesis Invasive Actions in the Room Lung Actions RSU Karsa Husada Batu ¹⁰	therapeutic communication and the level of anxiety experienced by patients undergoing invasive thoracentesis in the pulmonary procedure room	thoracentesis is in the pulmonary procedure room of observation RSU Karsa Husada Batu	design. The data was collected using sheets and a questionnaire.	The therapeutic communication and the level of anxiety experienced by patients undergoing invasive thoracentesis in the pulmonary procedure room of RSU Karsa Husada Batu. The study also identified other factors that contribute to anxiety, such as previous experiences with invasive thoracentesis. Overall, the findings suggest that better therapeutic communication can help reduce patient anxiety during invasive procedures.
A3	Author: Baharuddin et al., (2023) Journal Identity: <i>Window of Nursing Journal</i> , 4(1), 9-16.	The Influence of Therapeutic Communication on Anxiety in the Elderly ⁸	Examine the effect of therapeutic communication on the level of anxiety in elderly patients	60 elderly individuals	Quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pre-post test design.	The study showed a significant reduction in anxiety among elderly patients post-therapeutic communication intervention. The study concluded that this approach notably reduced anxiety, particularly in patients with positive attitudes and motivation for recovery.
A4	Author: Xiang et al. (2022) Journal Identity: <i>Universal Access in the Information Society</i> https://doi.org/10.1007/s10209-022-00915-6	Older adults' prevention and communication to beat anxiety: The diminishing utility of proactive coping actions ¹	Investigate the influence of taking proactive coping actions on older adults' anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Aged 50 and older from 27 European countries.	Cross-sectional survey conducted through telephone-administered interviews	The study found that one-third of older adults reported anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic, and one-fifth reported increased anxiety compared to before the pandemic. Taking proactive coping actions was associated with increased anxiety in older adults. Face-to-face communication was associated with lower anxiety, while electronic communication was associated with higher anxiety. These findings suggest that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental well-being of older adults.

A5	Author: Mawaddah & Handrianto, (2023) Journal Identity: <i>Jurnal Kegawatdar uratan Medis Indonesia</i> , 2(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.58545/jkmi.v2i1.43	Therapeutic Communication with Patients In The Emergency Room Hospital ¹³	Determine the effectiveness of therapeutic communication in emergency patients who experience anxiety	32 respondents.	Pre- experimental research design with a one-group pre-test post- test design approach	The results of this study show that therapeutic communication can reduce the anxiety of all respondents who are experiencing emergencies, both emergency and non-emergency triage.
A6	Author: Amir et al. (2023) Journal Identity: <i>Archives of The Medicine and Case Reports</i> , 4(3), 377– 384. https://doi.org/10.37275/amcr.v4i3.328	Therapeutic Communication in Elderly Patients: A Systematic Literature Review ¹⁴	Explore the principles and strategies of effective therapeutic communication in interacting with the elderly.	Elderly patients	The literature search process was carried out on various databases (PubMed, Web of Sciences, EMBASE, Cochrane Libraries, and Google Scholar)	This study found that the several principles and strategies in therapeutic communication with the elderly can help them deal with any feelings of anxiety, stress, or loneliness they may be experiencing.
A7	Author: Loihala et al., (2019) Journal Identity: JIMPK: <i>Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa & Penelitian Keperawatan</i> n	The Relationship Between Therapeutic Communication and Preoperative Patient Anxiety Levels in the Inpatient Ward of Dr. Sumantri Hospital ¹⁵	Determine the relationship between therapeutic communication on and preoperative patient anxiety levels in the inpatient ward of Dr. Sumantri Hospital, Parepare City.	Of the fifty- four respondents a , five were elderly respondents aged 56-70 years.	Quantitative research with cross- sectional research design.	The research at RS Dr. Sumantri Kota Parepare revealed a significant correlation between therapeutic communication and preoperative anxiety levels, with 59.3% reporting good communication. The study aligns with previous research, indicating a link between therapeutic communication and preoperative anxiety, with younger adults showing higher anxiety levels than the older ones, consistent with fears associated with surgery.
A8	Author: Sukardin & Azamti, (2019)	Application of Shannon Weaver's Communication	Determine the effect of applying Shannon	98 elderly individuals	A quasi- experimental design with a pre-test and	The research demonstrated a significant reduction in anxiety levels among the

	Journal Identity: Jurnal Ilmiah Keperawatan Indonesia (JIKI), 2(2), 1-15.	Model in the Elderly in the Parempuan Public Health Center Working Area, West Lombok District ⁹ .	Weaver's communication model on reducing anxiety levels in the elderly in the working area of Parempuan Public Health Center, West Lombok Regency.	post-test in one group	in elderly after applying Shannon Weaver's communication model. The paired t-test analysis with SPSS version 16.0 showed a p-value of 0.001, indicating a substantial improvement in anxiety levels after the intervention.
A9	Author: Larira et al., (2023) Journal Identity: Forikes Voice Health Research Journal, 13(1), 1-8.	Therapeutic Communication and Anxiety Levels of Cancer Patients at RSUP Prof. DR. R.D. Kandou Manado ¹¹	Determine the therapeutic communication and anxiety levels among cancer patients.	All cancer patients receiving treatment who were scheduled to receive chemotherapy at RSUP Prof. Dr. R D Kandou Manado.	Observational analytic design with a cross-sectional approach The study found no significant correlation between therapeutic communication and patient anxiety in facing cancer therapy procedures at Prof. Dr. RD Kandou Hospital in Manado. The majority of respondents reported good therapeutic communication by nurses, but there was no significant relationship between therapeutic communication and anxiety levels in cancer patients.
A10	Author: Cholis et al. (2020) Journal Identity: Jurnal Keperawatan Terpadu (Integrated Nursing Journal) http://jkt.poltekkes-mataram.ac.id/index.php/home/index	The Relationship between Nurses' Therapeutic Communication and Patient Anxiety Levels at Hemodialysis Dr Harjono Hospital, Ponorogo ¹⁶	Determine the relationship between therapeutic communication of nurses and anxiety levels in patients with hemodialysis therapy	250 individuals	Cross-sectional design The results summarize that there is a significant relationship between the therapeutic communication of nurses and anxiety levels in hemodialysis patients. The higher the level of therapeutic communication by nurses, the lower the level of anxiety in patients. The study also found that most of the therapeutic communication by nurses was good, and most of the patients experienced mild levels of anxiety.

Discussion

Based on research by Ferawati et al. (2022), it was found that the elderly

experienced more mild anxiety. This is because the level of maturity of age can affect a person's coping abilities and mechanisms to overcome anxiety¹⁰. This is in line with the research by Loihala et al. (2019), which says that the older you get, the more mature you are in thinking and concentrating when coping with the problems you face¹⁵. Research conducted by Xiang et al. (2022) is also in line with the idea that the older the age, the less likely they are to experience anxiety due to having better emotional regulation and more experience in facing challenges¹.

However, even though the elderly experience mild levels of anxiety, it must still be overcome. One of the actions that can be taken to reduce anxiety in the elderly is to provide therapeutic communication. Therapeutic communication can be defined as face-to-face communication between two or more people that allows for direct verbal and nonverbal reactions. Communication is very important in the nursing service process of providing nursing care. Good communication can give knowledge on client behavior and help clients deal with the problems they face.

Applying therapeutic communication techniques to elderly respondents requires a different approach from adult respondents. Based on research, Mawaddah & Handrianto (2023) found that in communicating with elderly groups, there are many obstacles, one of which is the emotional reaction of the elderly who are still unstable. Therapeutic communication techniques that can be used in elderly groups are listening and providing information, especially those involving the patient's family¹³. This is also supported by research by Amir et al. (2023), that listening with empathy and patience is essential in therapeutic communication with the elderly. This is because the elderly often experience hearing loss, so these techniques can provide time for the elderly to manage information and respond better. In addition, the use of language must also be simple and easy to understand to help establish effective communication¹⁴.

Based on research by Sukardin & Azamti (2019), after receiving therapeutic communication, there is a change in elderly behavior from rejection to cooperation. This was realized with the help of the involvement of family members and close friends as transmitters to get to know more about the client. The effects of providing therapeutic communication therapy also vary⁹. In research conducted, Siregar et al. (2021) state that there is an increase in the ability of the elderly to control anxiety and increase motivation, pleasure, and openness in solving every problem faced. However, this is not

permanent and only reduces the intensity of anxiety¹². The increase in motivation is also in line with research by Baharuddin et al. (2023), that the patient's recovery motivation has a positive nature to achieve it with strength or encouragement. Having a positive attitude makes patients always optimistic about dealing with their illness⁸.

That way, the explanation above indicates that therapeutic communication can reduce anxiety levels in the elderly. This is in line with research by Cholis et al. (2020) that the higher the therapeutic communication carried out by nurses, the lower the patient's anxiety level. Patients feel a psychological influence if they are given clear information about medical actions, health conditions, the purpose and benefits of actions, and the impact of actions. They also provide opportunities for patients to ask questions about their illness. The more information obtained, the less worry experienced, so that it will reduce anxiety in patients¹⁶. However, this is not in line with research conducted by Larira et al. (2023), that there is no relationship between nurse therapeutic communication and patient anxiety¹¹. This can be caused by differences in the characteristics of each elderly person in dealing with problems. Everyone's anxious response depends on personal maturity, coping mechanisms, and self-defense mechanisms used to overcome their anxiety, namely by suppressing existing conflicts and someone does not want to think about things that are less pleasant to them. Although nurses have provided good therapeutic communication, sometimes some patients are still focused on their illness, so patients still feel anxious.

Conclusion

Anxiety in the elderly is a common issue that can impact their quality of life. Research indicates that therapeutic communication by healthcare professionals can help reduce anxiety levels in the elderly, but its effectiveness may vary depending on individual characteristics. Factors such as age maturity and the emotional state of the elderly should be taken into consideration in therapeutic communication approaches. Additionally, research also highlights the importance of providing clear information to patients about their health conditions, medical procedures, and their benefits as a way to alleviate anxiety in patients. In the context of the elderly, culturally based approaches and nonverbal communication can also aid in creating effective communication.

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Conflict of Interest

None

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