



Enhancing Interpersonal Communication Strategies for Health Workers Engaging with COVID-19 Patients at Bima City Hospital: A Path to Optimized Patient Care

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Abstract. This study aims to explore communication barriers between healthcare professionals and COVID-19 patients at Bima City Hospital and develop strategies to address these challenges. Qualitative descriptive methods collected data from selected informants, including health workers and patients. The results identified three main barriers: process, psychosocial, and physical. Process barriers involve language, cultural differences, and medical jargon, while psychosocial barriers include stress, anxiety, and fear. Physical barriers consist of personal protective equipment and isolation measures. By addressing these barriers, healthcare professionals can improve patient care and foster stronger patient relationships.

Keywords: Inhibitory Aspects · Interpersonal Communication · COVID-19

1 Introduction

The anxiety experienced by health workers while navigating their responsibilities during the ongoing pandemic has a profound impact on their psychological well-being. As they face the daunting task of managing patients with COVID-19, it becomes imperative for these healthcare professionals to comprehend and adopt appropriate communication patterns, especially given the physical limitations inherent in conducting patient assessments. Furthermore, health workers often find themselves under personal pressure when there is a surge in COVID-19 cases, as they are required to endure long shifts and may have to contend with limited facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, the continuous and mandatory use of personal protective equipment, encompassing full-body coverage, further contributes to the discomfort experienced by these medical personnel over extended periods of time.

In Ichwanhaq [1], various studies have identified a considerable prevalence of symptoms associated with mental health disorders in healthcare workers, with depression (47%) and anxiety (50%) being prominent among them. Moreover, healthcare professionals who manage COVID-19 patients have been found to experience a diminished quality of life (45%) [2]. These dedicated individuals face an elevated risk of infection and are constantly exposed to the potential transmission of the highly contagious

COVID-19 virus [3]. Given the escalating workload faced by healthcare staff, it becomes imperative to provide them with adequate infrastructure and mental health support to address the physical and psychological exhaustion they encounter [4].

The anxiety experienced by healthcare workers when dealing with COVID-19 patients can significantly impede their interpersonal communication skills. Eisenberg, as cited in Liliweri [5], has identified four primary barriers to effective communication: process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychosocial barriers. These barriers hinder the establishment of a comprehensive understanding between healthcare professionals and patients, thereby compromising the quality of care provided.

To mitigate these barriers and foster robust relationships between healthcare professionals and patients, the development of effective communication patterns is crucial within the context of interpersonal communication. Healthy interpersonal communication facilitates problem-solving and decision-making and fosters personal growth. It is important to recognize that health communication has emerged as a novel concept, emphasizing the significance of communication in addressing health-related issues. As highlighted by Liliweri [5], health communication explores the strategic utilization of communication strategies to disseminate health information that significantly influences individuals and communities, ultimately guiding health-related decision-making.

Effective communication penetrates various levels and stages when addressing health challenges, encompassing a broad scope. By acknowledging and overcoming the barriers discussed above, healthcare professionals can strengthen their relationships with patients and enhance the overall quality of care provided. Furthermore, multiperspective approaches to health communication encompass various dimensions, such as cultural sensitivity, language proficiency, and patient empowerment, ensuring that healthcare professionals communicate effectively with diverse populations. These multiperspective considerations further underscore the importance of comprehensive and adaptable communication strategies in the realm of healthcare.

2 Research Method

This research uses qualitative descriptive research methods, which are methods that conduct research that produces descriptive data in the form of words, images, and book books, these data are based on interview manuscripts, notes or memos, and other official documents, in another sense, this method is a method that produces descriptive and written qualitative data with information from people who create hypotheses from field research. The main data source is obtained by choosing informants who are considered worthy of providing data, in this study, the researcher chose several informants who could support the completeness of the data needed by the researcher, but to complete the research data, two data sources were required, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources. This study uses qualitative descriptive data analysis with data management techniques and analysis carried out jointly in the research process. The method used analyzes the Miles and Huberman Model [6]. In this study, researchers used source triangulation techniques. Triangulation is used in qualitative research to examine and establish validity by analyzing from various perspectives. Triangulation to the consistency of a study while validity in qualitative research refers to whether the research findings accurately reflect the situation and are supported by evidence.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Obstacles in Interpersonal Communication Between Healthcare Professionals and COVID-19 Patients at Bima City Hospital: An Academic Analysis

A multitude of barriers, including psychosocial, semantic, and physical factors influences the communication dynamics between healthcare workers and COVID-19 patients. Psychosocial barriers manifest when healthcare workers encounter external pressures that extend beyond the boundaries of the hospital. For example, when patients' families express a desire to visit their loved ones receiving treatment, healthcare professionals must skillfully demonstrate their knowledge and education to effectively manage such situations. Furthermore, community responses affected by the social conditions surrounding COVID-19 can pose challenges to communication.

Semantic barriers emerge as difficulties in accurately conveying messages due to language code misinterpretation caused by physical barriers. The utilization of masks, an essential precautionary measure during the pandemic, can impede speech audibility and hinder the transmission of visual cues. Consequently, errors in message interpretation have become more prevalent, thereby undermining the efficacy of communication between healthcare professionals and COVID-19 patients.

Physical barriers represent a significant obstacle healthcare workers and patients face throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing treatment without physical contact and enforcing strict physical distancing measures create impediments to establishing meaningful connections. Nevertheless, healthcare professionals and COVID-19 patients are determined to communicate effectively. They strive to surmount these challenges by harnessing the potential of technology, allowing them to bridge the physical gaps that separate them in terms of time and space.

However, it is essential to approach these barriers with an optimistic perspective, recognizing them as catalysts for growth and innovation within the realm of healthcare communication. While psychosocial and physical barriers may initially impede effective communication, healthcare professionals possess the agency to address these challenges proactively. By aptly showcasing their knowledge and education, healthcare workers can assuage external pressures and cultivate trust with patients and their families. Adapting communication styles to accommodate linguistic nuances and grammatical variations enhances clarity and comprehension. Technological advancements serve as powerful tools to facilitate communication, enabling healthcare professionals to maintain meaningful connections with COVID-19 patients despite the physical constraints imposed by the pandemic.

The intricate interplay between psychosocial, semantic, and physical barriers presents formidable challenges in the communication dynamics between healthcare professionals and individuals affected by COVID-19. Nevertheless, embracing an optimistic mindset empowers healthcare professionals to perceive these barriers as opportunities for both professional and personal growth. By adopting this positive perspective, they can embark on a journey of exploring imaginative and innovative strategies to foster meaningful connections with patients, leveraging the potential of various technological advancements such as video conferencing tools, virtual consultations, and online support groups. This approach not only allows healthcare professionals to navigate the

complexities of communication but also enables them to effectively overcome these barriers and provide exceptional care and unwavering support to patients during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The multidimensional nature of these communication barriers encompasses psychosocial factors, which encompass the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects that influence individuals' perceptions and responses to the pandemic. On the other hand, semantic barriers involve challenges arising from language barriers, varying health literacy levels, and the interpretation of medical terminology, which can hinder effective communication between healthcare professionals and patients. Additionally, physical barriers, including the need for personal protective equipment, social distancing measures, and limited access to in-person healthcare services, further complicate the communication process.

Adopting an optimistic perspective confers healthcare professionals with the ability to transcend these impediments by demonstrating their expertise and adapting their communication strategies to accommodate the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic. By capitalizing on their vast knowledge and skills, healthcare professionals can tailor their communication approaches to effectively address the multifaceted psychosocial, semantic, and physical barriers encountered during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The instrumental role played by technological advancements in surmounting these barriers cannot be overstated, as they provide alternative channels for communication. Notably, video conferencing tools serve as a valuable resource for healthcare professionals, facilitating remote consultations and enabling the maintenance of meaningful connections with patients while mitigating the need for physical proximity. Virtual consultations, which afford patients the opportunity to receive medical guidance and support from the comfort of their own homes, significantly enhance accessibility and convenience. Additionally, the establishment of online support groups fosters a sense of community among patients, allowing them to share experiences, seek guidance, and provide mutual support, thus fortifying their resilience in the face of the multifarious challenges imposed by the pandemic.

By embracing these technological solutions while nurturing a positive outlook, healthcare professionals can adeptly navigate the intricate intricacies of communication and triumph over the formidable barriers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This proactive approach not only guarantees the provision of exceptional care but also underscores the pivotal importance of unwavering support extended to patients during these unparalleled times. Through their steadfast dedication and unwavering commitment, healthcare professionals can transcend adversities, foster profound connections, and ultimately contribute to the overall well-being of individuals profoundly impacted by the far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 Conclusion

A variety of impediments, including psychological, semantic, and physical constraints, impact the communication dynamics between healthcare workers and COVID-19 patients at Bima City Hospital. External influences, linguistic code misunderstanding,

and physical separation tactics all pose difficulties in establishing efficient communication. Healthcare providers may overcome these challenges by maintaining a positive attitude and utilising technology improvements. During the current COVID-19 issue, strategies such as highlighting expertise, adjusting communication approaches, using video conferencing capabilities and virtual consultations, and developing online support groups may build meaningful relationships and assure the delivery of great treatment. Recognising these impediments as possibilities for development and innovation, healthcare practitioners may traverse the complexity of communication, eventually contributing to the well-being of pandemic survivors.

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