

## Description of the Implementation of Interpersonal Communication between Registration Officers and Elderly Patients at the Outpatient Registration Area of Hospital X

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### Abstract

**Background:** A hospital is a healthcare facility that provides emergency, inpatient, and outpatient services. Before receiving outpatient services, patients must first register at the outpatient registration counter. Communication between the registration officer and the patient is crucial to understanding the patient's needs and complaints. Interpersonal communication is verbal and nonverbal communication that mutually influences the perception of the other person. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is characterized by openness, support, a positive attitude, empathy, and equality. This is especially important for elderly patients who often experience physical and psychological decline. This study aims to describe the implementation of interpersonal communication between registration officers and elderly patients at the outpatient Registration Area of Hospital X. **Methods:** This research used a qualitative method with a case study design. Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, using a purposive sampling technique for informants. **Results:** The research results show that interpersonal communication between registration staff and elderly patients, in terms of positive attitudes, empathy, and equality, is already well-functioning. However, openness and support are still less effective, as registration services are conducted daily as a routine, leading staff to prioritize efficiency. Meanwhile, support remains spontaneous and has not yet become a habit. **Conclusion:** Interpersonal communication between registration staff and elderly patients is generally good, particularly in terms of positive attitudes, empathy, and equality. However, openness and support still need improvement.

### INTRODUCTION

Outpatient services receive special attention from hospital management, given that the number of outpatients tends to be higher than other types of care. Before receiving outpatient care at the hospital, patients are required to register at the outpatient registration counter (Ade Aulia Siahaan, Tri Anjelita, 2023). The outpatient registration counter serves as the initial service unit in the hospital. This registration process plays a central role in coordinating activities across various other units, starting with the registration stage. Therefore, medical records officers play a crucial role in the outpatient unit (Silitonga et al., 2023). During the patient registration process, communication plays a crucial role in establishing a rapport between staff and patients so they can understand what the

patient needs or what their complaints are. Effective communication will create comfort and help maintain a good working relationship with the patient (Rangkuti et al., 2024).

Communication is a process in which one person (the communicator) conveys a message to another person (the recipient) with the aim of expressing attitudes, opinions, thoughts, or behavior, either verbally or indirectly through media. However, not everyone is skilled at communicating, so several methods are needed to convey information. Based on the method of conveying information, it can be divided into verbal and nonverbal communication (Desi Damayani Pohan, 2021). Verbal and nonverbal communication skills are a crucial aspect of the service process. Communication is a soft skill, or basic ability, that service personnel must possess to maintain service quality, starting with the communication skills of registration staff (Nur Qamarina, Tri Purnama Sari, 2021).

There are four forms of communication: intrapersonal communication, group communication, mass communication, and interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is the exchange of information in the form of thoughts, messages, and behavior between two people (Awalya & Iman, 2024). Interpersonal communication is face-to-face communication, each person involved in the communication influences the views of the other party with whom they are communicating, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication consists of openness, empathy, positive attitudes, support and equality (Reni Meritasari, 2020).

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is highly relevant in the context of healthcare, particularly when interacting with elderly patients who require an empathetic, supportive, and equitable approach to improve the quality of care. Interpersonal communication is generally more precise and accurate, and it is also a form of communication that is used to help resolve patient problems (Junianti et al., 2018).

Communication with the elderly requires special attention, much like that given to children. The elderly's communication skills decline due to declines in various functions of the organs of sight, hearing, speech, and perception, as well as psychological or emotional changes, social interactions, and spirituality. These changes can hinder the process of receiving and interpreting the intent and purpose of communication. This decline in physical function affects personality, leading to behavioral problems. Behaviors that indicate fear, confusion, and insecurity can hinder free communication (Reni Meritasari, 2020).

The Central Statistics Agency classifies the elderly into three age groups, namely young elderly (age group 60-69 years), middle elderly (age group 70-79 years), and old elderly (age group 80 years and above). Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2022, over the past ten years, the percentage of the elderly population in Indonesia has increased from 7.57% in 2012 to 10.48% in 2022. This figure is predicted to continue to increase to reach 19.9% in 2045. With the increasing number of elderly, it will cause an increase in elderly patients in health units in Indonesia. This is because the elderly are susceptible to diseases caused by the decline in organ function in the elderly (Awalya & Iman, 2024).

This is in line with the results of a preliminary study conducted in January 2025 at Hospital X after interviewing one of the outpatient registration officers, in practice registration officers often face obstacles, especially when serving elderly patients who tend to experience various declines in physical function such as difficulty hearing and seeing, which can hinder communication. In addition, emotional changes that often occur in the elderly so that sometimes miscommunication occurs.

From the background explanation, the aim of this study is to determine the implementation of interpersonal communication during registration between registration officers and elderly patients, which is expected to be an improvement effort with the aim of increasing the quality of hospital services, especially for elderly patients, and minimizing miscommunication.

## **METHOD**

This research used a qualitative method with a case study design. The research was conducted at Hospital X, Tasikmalaya City, from January to April 2025. Data collection was conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation.

This study involved registration officers at Hospital X who handled the patient registration process. Five informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on the criteria, namely 1 special registration officer at the registration counter for patients at risk of falling which includes elderly patients, 1 registration coordinator, 3 elderly people aged 60 years and over.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interpersonal communication between registration staff and elderly patients when they register for outpatient treatment. The supporting factors for effective interpersonal communication between registration staff and elderly patients, as identified based on interviews with registration staff and elderly patients, are:

### 1. Openness

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers through a series of interviews conducted with registration officers and elderly patients, openness in interpersonal communication is evident in the registration officers' efforts to greet elderly patients in a friendly manner, maintain eye contact, and adapt language when communicating with the elderly, such as using Sundanese as their mother tongue for better understanding. Officers also explain the digital registration process slowly and clearly, and provide space for patients to ask questions.

Information such as queue check-in status on the Mobile JKN app is conveyed by the registration staff in a loud voice to ensure clarity, given that many elderly patients have hearing impairments. Patients felt comfortable, even though the staff didn't always introduce themselves, as they received easy-to-understand explanations and assistance when they encountered difficulties. Observations also indicated openness, as the registration staff maintained eye contact while speaking and displayed focused listening gestures.

Openness in interpersonal communication refers to the willingness to reveal information about oneself accurately. Openness also includes a willingness to listen openly and respond honestly to others' messages (DeVito, 2016). Openness according to (Halila & Fauzan, 2025) Openness in interpersonal communication means that individuals are willing to share information appropriately, but also about listening to others.

In line with this research, the effectiveness of openness in interpersonal communication during the outpatient registration process at Hospital X demonstrated a willingness to listen openly and respond honestly to others' messages. This was demonstrated by the registration staff listening to patients' complaints and difficulties. Observations also indicated that the registration staff displayed focused listening gestures. Although registration staff did not always introduce themselves, this was because the registration process had become a daily routine that occurred continuously and within a short period of time.

With the large number of patients served and time constraints, registration staff tended to prioritize speed and efficiency to ensure a smooth registration process. Therefore, self-introductions or opening greetings were often skipped. Nevertheless, introducing staff at the beginning of the interaction plays a crucial role, especially for elderly patients. This action not only reflects professionalism and courtesy but also clarifies the roles of the staff serving them. By understanding the staff's roles, elderly patients will more easily understand the service flow, thereby reducing confusion during the registration process and subsequent treatment.

### 2. Support

Support is providing support to other people in the situations they experience (Awalya & Iman, 2024). This is also the same as (DeVito, 2016) states that interpersonal communication support is a behavior that is shown to be descriptive rather than evaluative. Based on the results of the interview, the support provided by registration officers to the elderly can be seen from the descriptive support provided by officers to elderly patients, Such messages as "get well soon" and "don't forget your check-ups" serve as a form of attention and motivation. Staff also advise patients who frequently miss their scheduled appointments to bring a companion to their next visit. Messages such as directions to wait in the clinic are part of the supportive communication provided to elderly patients during the registration process.

However, interviews also indicated that this support was not provided evenly, as some patients felt they were simply registered without further guidance. This is supported by observations that, although staff frequently offered supportive messages, they were not always consistent with all registered patients.

Thus, the effectiveness of the support communicated by the staff to the elderly is demonstrated by their prompt and encouraging reminders to schedule check-ups. The use of polite, easy-to-understand language also serves as a persuasive way to encourage them to remember their check-up dates. However, the support provided by the staff is still spontaneous and has not yet become

part of the service's routine. The lack of specific reminders from the hospital regarding the importance of supportive communication has resulted in this lack of consistent implementation.

### 3. Positive attitude

The effectiveness of a positive attitude in interpersonal communication at the outpatient registration desk at Hospital X is based on research findings from staff members' efforts to maintain a calm tone of voice, display a friendly expression, and maintain eye contact even during busy registration times. Staff members use polite phrases such as "Please wait a moment, ma'am/sir," or use Sundanese to create a calm atmosphere and respect for elderly patients.

A positive attitude is an optimistic outlook manifested in attitudes and actions. This means that every communicator must have a positive attitude, behavior, feelings, and thoughts. A positive attitude can be demonstrated through various behaviors, such as respecting others (Junianti et al., 2018). In line with this research, interviews with registration coordinators also emphasized the importance of maintaining polite behavior when dealing with impatient patients, by remaining calm and not getting emotional. The language used attempted to calm and provide clarity, such as slowly explaining that patients had to wait their turn. Elderly patients also reported that registration staff always greeted them with a smile, creating a comfortable interaction. A positive attitude, according to (DeVito, 2016) Positive feedback is a response that demonstrates acceptance. In good communication, especially when delivering criticism, it's important to maintain respect for others and maintain a positive atmosphere.

This aligns with the registration officer's attitude, who consistently provided positive feedback, even in a crowded and stressful situation. She maintained a positive demeanor, demonstrating her respect for elderly patients.

### 4. Empathy

Based on research findings on the ability of registration officers to understand the conditions and difficulties of elderly patients, particularly when using the JKN mobile application for online registration. Officers demonstrate empathy by directly and politely asking if patients need assistance, using the more familiar Sundanese language to make patients feel comfortable, and observing facial expressions to recognize signs of confusion or anxiety. Using appropriate language, friendly intonation, and a friendly approach are strategies for officers to build trust and reduce patients' hesitation when expressing difficulties.

Research results by (Awalya & Iman, 2024) Empathy in interpersonal communication can be seen from how communication occurs between the communicator and the communicant from verbal and nonverbal communication. (DeVito, 2016) Empathy is the ability to feel what another person is experiencing in a given situation from that perspective.

In line with this research, registration staff felt empathy for the elderly and expressed their willingness to help when needed to ensure their comfort. This demonstrates that empathy is not only demonstrated through words, but also through attitude, attention, and adjustment of communication methods to the patient's emotional state and background.

### 5. Equality

The research revealed that staff strive to serve all patients patiently and politely, regardless of their status, whether they are BPJS patients or general patients, elderly or not. Staff consistently maintain a respectful tone by addressing each patient with the term "Sir/Madam" as a sign of respect, while ensuring that the service provided remains friendly. This was directly felt by elderly patients, who stated that staff were always polite, smiled, and explained information slowly when needed, reflecting an attitude of equal respect for all patients, regardless of their background or condition.

This is also supported by (DeVito, 2016) Interpersonal communication is more effective when conducted in an atmosphere of equality, where there is no superiority but rather recognition of the contributions and presence of others.

The staff's attitude of serving all patients fairly, regardless of background, membership status, or age, reflects an understanding of the importance of creating equal interactions. Registration staff also fosters equality by positioning themselves according to their age, that is, younger people. When registering elderly patients, registration staff consider them to be individuals who deserve respect. Therefore, they always use polite language that is easy for elderly patients to understand.

Based on the results of the research conducted (Halila & Fauzan, 2025) Equality in interpersonal communication involves mutual respect, dialogue, and acceptance of each other's opinions. In line with this research, observation results also show that registration officers and elderly patients demonstrate an interaction of mutual respect and acceptance of each other's opinions.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results above, the researcher concluded that interpersonal communication occurred between registration officers and elderly patients at the Outpatient Registration Center of Hospital X which occurred during the patient's registration process. In the interaction between registration officers and elderly patients, the effectiveness of interpersonal communication was found, namely openness, support, positive attitude, empathy, and equality. For the effectiveness of support, positive attitude, empathy, and equality, it has been running well, while for the effectiveness of openness, it has not been running well. In addition to the effectiveness of communication, the interaction that occurred between registration officers and elderly patients has also shown responsive and caring interactions.

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