



Research Article

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Lost in Translation: A Meta-Synthesis of Communication and Missed Nursing Care

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ABSTRACT

Communication is seen as essential in operationalizing various industries, such as the healthcare sector. In nursing practice, the process facilitates building trust between nurses, patients, and colleagues, which can result in quality care. This meta-synthesis examines the intricate relationship between communication and instances of missed nursing care. A total of ten (10) published research studies were reviewed and sourced from various databases. It identifies three main themes: the communication crisis stemming from overworked nurses, the gaps between patient expectations and nurse communication, and the importance of expertise in bridging care gaps. The meta-synthesis highlights that high workloads and inadequate staffing hinder nurses' ability to communicate effectively, resulting in misunderstandings of roles and responsibilities among patients. The finding suggests a need for better policies in the nursing profession and training to enhance communication skills to bridge care gaps and enrich patient experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is a fundamental yet complex concept in nursing practice. It is regarded as the foundation of the relationship between the nurse and the patient, and it plays an important role in developing trust and providing comfort in nursing. Furthermore, it is viewed as a multifaceted process, described as a shared understanding between nurses and patients, influencing the nursing process, clinical judgment, and decision-making processes. Hence, effective communication is needed and vital in providing an effective nursing practice resulting in meeting patient care and recovery (Afriyie, 2020; Kwame & Petrucka, 2021).

Communication is a crucial process that nurses utilize when providing care since it affects all aspects of work and nurse-patient relationships. In a sense, it is through communication that operationalize the delivery of patient

care. Healthcare workers communicate with patients and peers. Considering this vital role of communication, Faubion (n.d) suggests that it is necessary to learn how crucial it is, how to nurture it efficiently, and how to adopt measures for effective communication. Sibiya (2018) added, the effectiveness of nurses' communication with patients significantly impacts significant outcomes, as it reduces medical errors and stimulates better health among patients.

Nursing as a healthcare science aims to meet people's needs as biopsychosocial and spiritual beings. Its practice necessitates scientific knowledge and technical, intellectual, and interpersonal skills. It denotes a blend of clinical practice, interpersonal communication, and knowledge (Kourkouta & Papathanasiou, 2014). However, patients frequently receive delayed and insufficient nursing care due to the prevalence of missed nursing care. Because of an aging population and better opportunities

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to treat diseases that historically had a quick and fatal course, the healthcare system is experiencing serious problems with care quality and availability. Worldwide, patients suffer grave effects due to missed nursing care (Edfeldt, 2024).

Through conducting meta-synthesis, this paper aimed to investigate how communication influences the rise of missed nursing care in healthcare using a variety of studies. Lachal et al. (2017) described meta-synthesis as an innovative technique in medical research that can be applied in various ways. It provides the right amount of balance between an objective framework, a methodical, scientific approach to data analysis, and the essential role of the researcher's subjectivity in creating the finished product. Through an array of studies, this meta-synthesis paper sought to identify the factors that give rise to missed nursing care during communication. This study further contextualized a perceived reality in the nursing field through different types of communication occurring in the field. Furthermore, this paper mainly addresses the question: How does missed nursing care affect the nurse and the patient as they communicate and establish relationships?

METHODS

This paper aimed to investigate how communication influences the rise of missed nursing care in healthcare using a variety of studies by conducting meta-synthesis. Meta-synthesis is a sophisticated and methodical way to extract knowledge from many primary studies. In contrast to conventional literature reviews, which provide an overview of individual studies, meta-synthesis entails integrating and synthesizing data from several sources. Evaluating, contrasting, and integrating the results of several investigations is a methodical procedure that digs more deeply than the obvious and draws insightful conclusions (Nicolas, 2024). In addition, meta-synthesis combines qualitative data to form a new interpretation. Meta-syntheses are best designed to re-interpret meaning across many qualitative studies (Atkins et al., 2008). Hence, through meta-synthesis, communication research and missed nursing care will be compiled, shedding light on how missed nursing care affects the interactions and relationships between nurses and patients. Additionally, this method's use of meta-synthesis for this specific subject will enable the creation of new information as a stimulant for intellectual growth and expand the context of the connection between communication and missed nursing care.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this meta-synthesis on the relationship between communication and missed nursing care were set to provide a foundation for future studies that will substantially benefit and answer the study's purpose.

This meta-synthesis considered only qualitative studies on missed care nursing and communication published in accessible journals. The study's origin could be anywhere and written in any language if an English translation is available. Meanwhile, the final bibliography tool excluded all other materials that were initially included but did not satisfy the prescribed inclusion criteria.

Search Strategy

The researchers conducted electronic database searches in Google Scholar, Google, PubMed, ResearchGate, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, ProQuest, and Springer. The databases generated significant studies on the relationship between communication and missed nursing care. However, there are still limited studies investigating this topic. The researcher also used keywords to find studies. The following are the terms and keywords: *nursing, communication, nursing communication, interprofessional nursing, missed nursing care, collaboration, and nurse-patient relationship*. Thus, utilizing the following keywords, the researcher discovered several pertinent resources acknowledged as references.

Selecting Relevant Studies

All relevant studies conducted by the search strategy were assessed and screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria established. All chosen materials were included in the initial bibliography tool. After thoroughly assessing the materials initially evaluated, the researcher investigated and applied the exclusion criteria. The remaining resources were reviewed according to the inclusion criteria. All included studies were compiled into a separate document. Additionally, a separate document was generated to collect references from the selected studies. The final phase in the selection procedure is the approval of materials for synthesizing selected studies.

Thirteen (13) research studies were reviewed. These were all sourced from various databases. Ten (10) met the inclusion criteria, while three were omitted because they did not. Data from ten research publications were extracted and used in the final synthesis. Of the ten research included, two used a descriptive and cross-sectional design; two used a content analysis design; one used an ethnographic design; one used a cross-sectional design; one used a descriptive qualitative design; one used a descriptive and correlational design combined; one used a descriptive mixed-method design; and one used a phenomenological qualitative design.

Interpreting the Results

The study used thematic analysis to discover patterns, motifs, and underlying meanings related to communication and missing nursing treatment. Thematic analysis is a valuable tool for identifying patterns and significance in data. It provides insights that aid comprehension of various phenomena (Aishwarya, 2024). In addition, the

researchers explored each theme further, providing detailed descriptions as well as data-supported evidence through corroboration as means of assessing the plausibility of result presented.

The results of this meta-synthesis focused on why nursing care is overlooked and how these reasons hinder communication and relationship-building between the nurse and the patient. For the final synthesis, the researchers interpreted the study's findings by comparing and contrasting the findings of all the included studies. To further explain the study's findings comprehensively and further elaborate on the reasons and effects of missing nursing care on the nurse-patient relationship and communication, the researcher also developed major themes and sub-themes within each major theme. Moreover, by using this method of result interpretation, the researcher was able to uncover important findings.

RESULTS

This meta-synthesis revealed substantial evidence about the relationship between communication and missed nursing care. Three significant themes emerged from this meta-synthesis on the relationship between communication and missed nursing care: (1) the Communication Crisis of Overworked Nurses, (2) the Hidden Gap Between Patient Expectations and Nurse Communication, and (3) the Power of Expertise in Preventing Care Gaps.

Theme 1 - Communication Crisis of Overworked Nurses

The synthesis revealed that nurses' experience of being overworked and confused commonly affects their ability to properly communicate with patients and other healthcare workers, resulting in missed nursing care. This theme suggests that the communication dilemma among overworked nurses contributes to the prevalence of missed nursing care. Collectively, two (2) sub-themes emerged under this theme, further explaining the communication crisis of overworked nurses. Sub-theme (1) Understaffed and overloaded explains the reality of nursing scarcity, resulting in nurses being overloaded with work that affects the quality of service they provide. Meanwhile, sub-theme (2), the fog of role confusion, highlights the absence of role clarity, resulting in a lack of awareness and comprehension of the scope of nursing practice. Such confusion may result in misunderstandings and delays that may affect the delivery of quality nursing service.

Theme 2 - Hidden Gaps Between Patient Expectations and Nurse Communication

Another theme from the synthesis is the hidden gaps between patient expectations and nurse communication. This theme emerged from combining the two (2) sub-themes: (a) the burden of unmet expectations and (b) the

silent voice of the vulnerable patient.

Accordingly, these hidden gaps emerge between what patients expect from their interactions with nurses and the actual communication they receive. These discrepancies often lead to patient dissatisfaction, failed nurse-patient relationships, and poor health outcomes, resulting in missed nursing care. Furthermore, patients' voices are also muted in some instances. Meanwhile, the silent voice of patients, caused by barriers to communication and a lack of autonomy, contributes to their incapacity to participate in informed decision-making, resulting in nursing care being neglected or delayed. By having the skills needed to communicate with patients, nurses can break down communication barriers that hinder them from obtaining favorable patient results and alleviate the prevalence of missed nursing care.

Theme 3 - Power of Expertise in Preventing Care Gaps

The last theme in this meta-synthesis describing the relationship between communication and missed nursing care is the power of expertise in preventing care gaps. This theme suggests that nursing communication is essential for optimal healthcare, especially in preventing care gaps. As frontline caregivers, nurses must ensure patients receive prompt and tailored treatment. Their communication expertise ensures that information is received, disseminated, and implemented promptly and efficiently. However, nurses cannot communicate with patients in other circumstances, increasing the likelihood of delayed or incomplete care.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1 - Communication Crisis of Overworked Nurses

The conduct of meta-synthesis revealed the important role of communication in nursing practice, and the challenges experienced lead to the delivery of quality health services.

The first theme highlighted the long history of nursing struggle. This theme is crucial for nurses, particularly when confronted with an overwhelming workload and insufficient assistance. It impairs their communication ability with patients and other healthcare workers, resulting in missed nursing care. The first sub-theme, *Understaffed and Overloaded*, offers insights into how this labor practice produces a rattle effect in quality healthcare delivery. The studies of Cartaxo (2024) and Sancar and Aktas (2024) explore how poor allocation of labor resources in healthcare affects the communication between nurses and patients.

On the other hand, the study of Cartaxo (2024) indicates that the most important reason nursing care is currently being missed is the lack of adequate resources in the face of high complexity and intensity levels of

nursing care. This study associated different missed care interventions with different causal paths and reasons. Considering these configurations, it was clear that the type of missed care interventions, particularly those relating to ambulation, administering scheduled medications and assessing vital signs, teaching about illness, emotional support, counseling, and training, adequate surveillance of cognitively impaired patients, timely responding to patient call lights, and discharge planning or attending interdisciplinary care conferences, were associated with the presence of poor allocation of labor resources. Because of the scarcity of labor resources, this can also lead to nurses being overloaded and understaffed. In their study, Sankar and Aktas (2024) explained that limited staffing and severe workloads for nurses result in missed nursing care, notably in basic care, punctuality, and patient-nurse contact. When nurses are overburdened with duties, they move swiftly from one to the next, giving only ample time for the nurse and patient to communicate. According to Perez-Francisco (2020), primary care nurses' job overload and the resulting burnout caused by their kind of work harm their health. However, this will impact patients, as their safety is jeopardized due to increased nursing errors caused by overload and burnout, and the resulting mortality and the quality of care patients receive are also affected. Hence, as Drummond (2023) emphasized, the patient experience is only as good as the caregiver experience, which emphasizes the importance of caring for nurses physically and emotionally.

Furthermore, as the number of patients increases, nurses are more likely to perform multiple duties simultaneously, such as administering medications, monitoring vital signs, and informing patients about their needs. This prevents the nurse from efficiently providing exemplary treatment to patients since they must move quickly to cater to each patient's needs. This also implies that patients cannot fully absorb all the information the nurse provides. According to Glette et al. (2017), inadequate staffing increases mortality risk and undesired conditions such as hospital-related infections and ulcers. Patients have limited information about their medical status as nurses speed through explanations while performing activities. Furthermore, as a result, the interaction between nurses and patients is inadequate, preventing information from passing through the patients' minds completely. Moreover, due to the intense workload and insufficient staff assistance, nurses become overwhelmed by exhaustion, resulting in missed nursing care for patients.

The *Fog of Role Confusion* is the second sub-theme under theme 1 that highlights the need for role clarity in nursing practice, such as clinical nurse specialists and practitioners. The lack of awareness and comprehension of these positions within the healthcare team and the public contributes to confusing role expectations and the

scope of practice for these roles (Carter, 2010). Nurses often serve as the frontline caregivers, doing a variety of tasks. However, role confusion happens when patients or their families do not comprehend the scope of the nurse's obligations. Nurses are responsible for monitoring patients, administering medications, and serving as a bridge between doctors and patients. However, patients expect them to make decisions regarding treatment or operations, generally outside the nurse's scope. According to Cohen et al. (2024), patients frequently misunderstand nurses' roles and confuse them with other healthcare roles. Patients may struggle to distinguish between nurses and other healthcare providers, or they may not perceive care needs like experts do (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Similarly, Kalisch et al. (2012) discovered that patients could only partially identify missed nursing care related to more medical aspects, such as vital signs, medication administration, assessment, surveillance, and IV site care, emphasizing patients' inability to fully evaluate the scope of nursing care and nurses' roles. Role confusion might start with patients' comprehension of their treatment. Patients may feel unclear, apprehensive, or uninformed about their treatment plan if healthcare team members' roles and responsibilities are not communicated.

Furthermore, patients may be unsure who is responsible for what aspects of their care, leading to uncertainty regarding whom to contact for various requirements. For example, patients may not know whether to approach a nurse or a doctor if they need medication. This confusion might cause care to be delayed or generate unnecessary avenues for communication, allowing the patient to seek assistance from the wrong person, resulting in dissatisfaction and missed nursing care.

Theme 2 - Hidden Gaps Between Patient Expectations and Nurse Communication

Effective communication is regarded as the foundation of the relationship between the nurse and the patient. It plays an important role in developing trust and providing comfort in nursing. Further, effective communication in the nursing field encourages high-quality nursing care, improved patient health outcomes, and patient and nurse satisfaction with treatment (Afriyie, 2020). However, hidden gaps emerge between what patients expect from their interactions with nurses and the actual communication they receive. These discrepancies often lead to patient dissatisfaction, failed nurse-patient relationships, and poor health outcomes, resulting in missed nursing care. They allow the prevalence of missed nursing care among patients. These gaps are further explained by the emergence of two (2) sub-themes in the conduct of the meta-synthesis: *The Burden of Unmet Expectations*, and *The Silent Voice of the Vulnerable Patient*.

The Burden of Unmet Expectations. Patients' expectations of their interactions with nurses influence



the development of the nurse-patient relationship. The study of Sancar and Aktas' (2024) explain, patients with higher education levels have more expectations but have more negative perceptions of nurses. One of their primary goals was for nurses to educate patients about their disease, experiments, examinations, disease phases, disease future, and nutrition. This means that the patients had high educational expectations and a desire to learn from the nurses, but their educational needs were not satisfactory, resulting in dissatisfaction (Kalyani et al., 2014). Nurses play an important role in translating patients' requirements into actionable care. However, when patients' expectations are not fully realized, the implications go beyond their displeasure. These unmet expectations might erode the trust between the nurse and the patient. Trust, as stated in the Sancar and Aktas (2024) study, is essential for a strong nurse-patient relationship because it allows for better diagnosis and encourages patients to share more about their health, as patients frequently feel more at ease and willing to divulge more details about their health status as a result of their reputable relationship. According to a study by Avallin (2020), it is critical for nurses to meet these expectations of nurses, communicating in a way that views the patient as an equal member of the healthcare team, as this will reduce the number of unmet patient expectations and decrease the prevalence of missed nursing care.

The Silent Voice of the Vulnerable Patient. Patients are said to be the center of health care, but too often, their voices are ignored or put to the side when decisions are made – decisions about their health, treatment plans, cost of their care, and more. Patient-centric care can still be lacking if gaining input from patients themselves is not an integral part of the process (Niehaus, 2021). Some patients remain silent in their encounters with nurses and other medical professionals in healthcare settings. These patients struggle to convey their needs or concerns, resulting in a silent, unmet voice in the nurse-patient communication process. Patients' vulnerability creates unseen obstacles to communication, marginalizing them and failing to address their concerns, resulting in missed nursing care. As stated in the study of Alshammari (2019), the existing communication styles and approaches nurses use create communication barriers, hindering patient-centered engagement. Language, cultural, and religious differences are all important considerations that could immediately influence the patient's communication experience and safety. These issues also occur in pharmaceutical security and patients' and family members' emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Additionally, Larsen et al. (2021) discovered that interpersonal communication and cultural understanding are critical to providing safe, high-quality nursing care and serve as the foundation for nursing goals, education,

and conformance. When a patient and caregiver cannot communicate in the same language, or there are other social or cultural barriers, misunderstandings, and possible injury increase drastically. As noted in their study, working with patients from multiple cultural backgrounds necessitates various tools and approaches, including language proficiency, interpreters, early patient information gathering, and communication training. This demonstrates how nurses' experiences with intercultural communication influence the quality of care. Lin et al. (2017) also investigated the cultural context of nursing students' communication experiences. Nursing students' unfavorable communication experiences were associated with their patients' terminal condition, a lack of training, low self-esteem and power position, poor emotional regulation, and cultural influences. Because of these communication barriers in healthcare, patients cannot efficiently and effectively convey their demands, preventing them from fully participating in shared autonomy and informed decision-making.

Mula and Estrada (2020) discovered that patients have limited decision-making power over their care due to their contact with nurses. The nurse continuously justifies any decision about care for the patient's benefit, leaving no room for their independence. When faced with a clinical scenario, experts make decisions based on scientific facts. On occasion, but not usually, they consider patient feedback. According to the study, the nurse prefers a submissive and passive patient who follows the therapeutic indications, which explains why the nurse examines patient clinical records in an impersonal manner, with the patient's voice only referring to pain or subjective perceptions. This implies that nurses should see patient interactions as crucial for understanding their experiences rather than attempting to change their views, reinforcing that patients have less autonomy in hospital settings. These studies focused on nurses' need to receive communication training to improve patient health outcomes.

Theme 3 - Power of Expertise in Preventing Care Gaps

The last theme that emerges highlights expertise as essential prevention in care gaps. This is further explained in the sub-theme: *The Inexperience Trap: When Communication Falls Short*. This theme implies that to properly communicate, one must first understand the patient and the events they describe. Communication facilitates the completion of accurate, consistent, and straightforward nursing duties, boosting patient satisfaction and healthcare professional safety. Suppose healthcare workers are not equipped and educated with communication skills. In that case, they will struggle to differentiate between their professional and personal lives, causing difficulties when transitioning from one to the other (Korkouta & Papathanasiou, 2014). Effective

communication is crucial to ensuring patient safety. However, when communication fails due to nurses' inexperience, patients struggle to express their needs, comprehend their care alternatives, and get involved in decision-making processes. This inexperienced trap arises when nurses lack the requisite skills, confidence, or knowledge and struggle to communicate information accurately, resulting in misconceptions, unfulfilled desires, and adverse patient outcomes. According to Lin et al. (2021), one-third of the participants in their study lacked communication skills. Up to 76% found it challenging and emotionally exhausting to speak with patients, particularly cancer patients. Patients' terminal illnesses exacerbated these difficulties: students' lack of training, low self-confidence, emotional troubles, and cultural differences. According to the study by Karadaş (2024), missed care was also found to harm patients' trust in nurses and their satisfaction with nursing care. This suggests that communication systems that will enhance nurse-patient communication and promptly address patients' needs must be developed. Missed care was most frequently observed in the form of deficiencies in communication, basic care, and timeliness, especially when it came to failing to meet the needs of the nurse-patient relationship.

Moreover, the study by Rooddehghan et al. (2024) showed that the area of patient communication has the most significant rate of missing nursing care among the different types, especially when failing to correctly inform and validate the patient's sentiments, among other things. This also suggests that nurses and nursing management must comprehend these elements to create and execute suitable solutions to improve the standard of nursing care, particularly in patient communication. The proficiency of nurses in clinical evaluation, instruction, and collaboration guarantees that patients have prompt, individualized care. Communication with patients, families, and the medical staff is essential for nurses to ensure that care is organized, updated, and reliable. Patient outcomes are enhanced, high-quality healthcare is delivered more effectively, and the frequency of patients missing nursing care is decreased when they close these covert care gaps.

CONCLUSION

This meta-synthesis covers the relationship between communication and missed nursing care in healthcare. It discusses three main themes regarding communication and missed nursing care: the crisis caused by overworked nurses, the hidden gap between patient expectations and nurse communication, and the power of expertise to prevent care gaps.

These themes point to the importance of effective communication for the quality and safety of patients and satisfactory treatment and nurses. The meta-synthesis once again proves how the communication process is

operationalizing various industries and how challenges met can hinder the achievement of set goals. In nursing practice, it can be said that issues with a heavy workload, vague responsibility, the unmet expectations of patients, and communication failures present broad challenges that demand an entire spectrum of measures for improvement on the patients' experiences in healthcare and the work environment among nurses. To study suggests that to address these problems, fundamental changes are needed, such as sufficient staffing, continuous nursing professional development, and a hospital culture that values empathetic, honest, and open communication. All these factors can be improved in the efficiency of the patient-centered healthcare system, patient satisfaction, and health outcomes by healthcare systems ensuring that nurses and patients have the resources and support they need to succeed.

With its present form, this meta-synthesis has limitations that future research can supplicate, such as exploring other areas in nursing practice, the healthcare sector in general, and the role of communication. Furthermore, for an objective representation of reality, a meta-analysis is recommended to investigate the results of quantitative studies that objectively explain the relationship between healthcare and communication phenomena.

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