



Comparison of Patient Perception of Nurse Caring Behavior in the Internal Room of the Hospital. Dr.H.Aloe Saboe, Gorontalo City and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Nurse caring behavior is an important component in improving the quality of nursing services because it is related to the quality of interaction between nurses and patients during the treatment process. Patients' perceptions of caring behavior can be used as an indicator in evaluating nursing services in hospitals. This study aims to determine the comparison of patients' perceptions of caring behavior of nurses in the inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital. The study used a comparative quantitative design with a cross sectional approach. The research sample amounted to 90 respondents consisting of 45 respondents each in both hospitals with purposive sampling techniques according to inclusion criteria. Data were collected using questionnaires that included indicators of presence, touch, listening, and understanding of patients, then analyzed univariately in the form of frequency and percentage distributions and bivariately using the Mann-Whitney test. The results of the study showed that in the attendance indicator, the percentage of good categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital was higher (73.3%) than at Dunda Limboto Hospital (66.7%), while the sufficient category at Dunda Limboto Hospital was larger (33.3%) than at Aloe Saboe Hospital (26.7%). In the touch indicator, the comparison shows the largest difference, where the category of both at Aloe Saboe Hospital is 80.0% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital is 60.0%, while the category of sufficient at Dunda Limboto Hospital (40.0%) is higher than at Aloe Saboe Hospital (20.0%). In the listening indicator, the good category at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 80.0% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital was 70.0%, while the sufficient category was 20.0% and 30.0%, respectively. In the understanding indicator, the good category at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 69.5% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital was 60.0%, while the sufficient category at Dunda Limboto Hospital (40.0%) was larger than Aloe Saboe Hospital (30.5%).

INTRODUCTION

The development of health services demands an improvement in the quality of services that focus not only on technical and procedural aspects, but also on the humanitarian dimension and interpersonal relationships between nurses and patients. In the context of nursing, one of the fundamental aspects that determines the quality of service is the caring behavior or caring behavior of nurses towards patients. Caring is a form of professional care that includes care, empathy, and a moral commitment to providing a humane and meaningful healing experience for patients (Rahmadani, T., Wulandari, A., & Rini, 2022)

In modern nursing practice, caring is no longer understood as a sympathetic act or emotional empathy, but rather as a form of therapeutic and transpersonal interaction between nurse and patient (Putri, F. & Kurniawan, 2021). Caring means presenting yourself fully, listening empathically, giving explanations patiently, and creating a sense of security in the treatment process. Thus, caring behavior not only reflects clinical expertise, but also affirms the professional identity of the nurse as a protector and companion to the patient's recovery.

Recent studies have shown that nurses' caring behaviors are closely related to patient satisfaction levels, loyalty to hospitals, and better clinical outcomes. (Zulkarnain, F., Dewi, A., & Nurhayati, 2023) Patients who feel empathy, warm communication, and active presence of nurses tend to have a positive perception of the quality of

nursing services. On the other hand, nurses' behavior that seems rushed, lacks communication, and does not show emotional empathy often leads to a negative perception of the quality of hospital services (Utami, W., Puspitasari, D., & Lestiani, 2021).

In the context of health services in Indonesia, the issue of caring behavior of nurses is becoming increasingly relevant. The transformation of the patient-centered care system requires a paradigm shift from "procedure-based services" to "empathy-based services". However, empirical studies in various hospitals in Indonesia still show that there is a gap between the idealism of caring and practice in the field. A study by (Arifin R Sulastri, E., Mulyana, 2023) It found that as many as 46% of patients in the inpatient room of a general hospital assessed that nurses' caring behavior was still in the moderate category, especially in the aspects of communication, empathy, and explanation of nursing actions. Similar results were also reported by (Daulay, W., & Sitanggang, 2023), which mentions that the dimensions of being with and enabling are still often overlooked due to high workloads and limited time for nurses in the inpatient room.

This phenomenon shows that there is an urgent need to understand how patients perceive the caring behavior of nurses, because the patient's perception is a real reflection of the successful implementation of caring values in nursing practice. Patients' perceptions of caring reflect their emotional experiences interacting with nurses during hospital stays. When patients feel cared for and listened to, trust and comfort increase; Conversely, if the patient feels neglected, anxiety and dissatisfaction will increase. (Rahayu, M., Astuti, W., & Nurhadi, 2023)

The local cultural context of Gorontalo which upholds the values of family, mutual cooperation, and social empathy also gives a special dimension to the meaning of caring in nursing. A local culture that places the value of mutual respect and help as the basis of social interaction, should be a strength for nurses to build warmer therapeutic relationships with patients. According to research by, (Siregar, H. & Amalia, 2024) The integration of local cultural values into caring practices can increase patient satisfaction by up to 30%. Therefore, the understanding of patient perceptions cannot be separated from the cultural context in which the research was conducted.

Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M Dunda Limboto Hospital. As the main referral hospital in Gorontalo City and Gorontalo regency, it is important to examine this phenomenon in more depth. The hospital is a hub for public health services that include patients from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Based on the results of initial observations, it was found that some patients stated that there were still nurses who had not fully shown a caring attitude, for example in terms of listening to patient complaints, providing explanations of nursing actions, and showing emotional empathy during the treatment process. However, most patients also appreciate the professionalism of nurses in handling medical procedures quickly and appropriately. It is this imbalance between technical and affective aspects that is interesting to further research through the patient perception approach.

In line with this, global research also shows a similar trend. Study by (Nikpour, S., 2025) in Iran found that nurses' caring behavior had a significant correlation with patient trust and loyalty ($p < 0.01$). These findings reinforce that caring is a universal element that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. Although the concept of caring is universal, its manifestations are highly contextual, depending on the social and cultural values in which nursing practices are performed. This is also the basis for research at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M Dunda Limboto Hospital.

From a practical perspective, a deep understanding of patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior can make a real contribution to nursing training planning, performance evaluation, and hospital quality improvement strategies. Through this descriptive research, it is hoped that a factual picture can be obtained about how patients in the inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M Dunda Limboto Hospital are. Assess the caring behavior of nurses. The data can then be used as a reflection material for nurses to improve their interpersonal approach in daily nursing practice.

Based on the preliminary study conducted by the researcher when conducting initial data collection in the inpatient room of Dr. H. ALOE SABOE Hospital Gorontalo City, it was found that there were a total of 35 nurses, with D3 Education qualifications of 18 people and nurses of 17 people, with an average working time of < 5 years of 17 people and > 5 years of 18 people. In the last 3 months, the total number of patients treated was 480 patients.

Based on the preliminary study conducted by the researcher when taking initial data in the hospital's inpatient room. Dr. M.M.Dunda Limboto was obtained, there were a total of 21 nurses, with D3 Education qualifications of 7 people, S1 6 people, and Nurses of 8 people. In the last 3 months, the total number of patients treated is 447 patients.

Based on the results of interviews conducted on September 20, 2025 with 8 patients in the internal inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City, information was obtained that a total of 3 patients stated that nurses were still lacking in practicing caring attitudes, such as being present when patients needed, soothing touch, listening skills, and efforts to understand the patient's condition and feelings. In addition, patients also complained that there were still delays in nurses in responding when patients needed help. Meanwhile, 5 other patients said that the service provided by the nurse was quite good.

Based on the results of interviews conducted on December 8, 2025 with 8 patients in the internal inpatient room of Dr. M.M Dunda Limboto Hospital. Information was obtained that 6 patients stated that the caregivers' caring behavior was still not optimal. These patients assessed that nurses did not show a caring attitude during the

provision of services. They revealed that nurses are often absent when patients need it, the touch given has not been able to calm down, nurses' ability to listen to complaints is still lacking, and efforts to understand patients' conditions and feelings are considered not optimal. In addition, patients also complain of delayed responses when they need help, resulting in a sense of discomfort and lack of attention during the treatment period. Meanwhile, only 2 patients said that the nurse's service was good enough. This comparison shows that negative perceptions of nurses' caring behavior are more dominant.

This shows that patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior still vary. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to determine the comparison of patients' perceptions of caring behavior of nurses in the internal inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City and Dr. M.M Dunda Limboto Hospital.

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in the effort to bring back human values in nursing practices that are increasingly technological. In the midst of the development of a digital-based health system and strict clinical protocols, the human presence of a nurse becomes a bridge between science and empathy. This research is expected to enrich the Indonesian nursing literature with contextual empirical data and provide practical recommendations for hospitals in realizing patient-centered and culturally sensitive nursing care.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design and types of research

This study is a comparative quantitative research with a cross sectional approach. The comparative design was used because the study aimed to compare patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior in two different hospitals, namely Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital Gorontalo City and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

The cross sectional approach was chosen because data collection was carried out at a certain time without any follow-up, so that the measured patient perception was a picture of the actual condition at the time of the study.

Research methods ((Bambang Sudaryana, 2022) Research methods are basically a scientific way to obtain data with a specific purpose and use. The purpose of this research method is to provide researchers with an overview of how research is carried out, so that problems can be solved.

Location and Time of the Research

This research was carried out in: Internal inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City Internal inpatient room of Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital. The research will be carried out in January 2026, including the stages of data collection, data processing, and analysis of research results.

Population and sample

The population in this study is all patients who are undergoing treatment in the internal inpatient room: Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City as many as 480 patients in the last three months. Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital has received 447 patients in the last three months. The total study population was 927 patients. Meanwhile, the sample in this study was 90 respondents.

Data analysis techniques

Univariate analysis

Univariate analysis was used to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of patient perceptions of nursing caring behavior in each hospital.

Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis was used to determine the comparison of patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior between two hospitals.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Distribution of Respondent Characteristics in the Internal Inpatient Room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital (n = 90)

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents by Characteristics

| Characteristics | Categories | RS Aloe Saboe n (%) | Dunda Hospital Limboto n (%) |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Age | 29–39 years old | 19 (42,2) | 17 (37,8) |
| | 40–49 years old | 16 (35,6) | 17 (37,8) |
| | 50–59 years old | 4 (8,9) | 5 (11,1) |
| | ≥ 60 years old | 6 (13,3) | 6 (13,3) |
| Gender | Male | 10 (22,2) | 18 (40,0) |
| | Women | 35 (77,8) | 27 (60,0) |

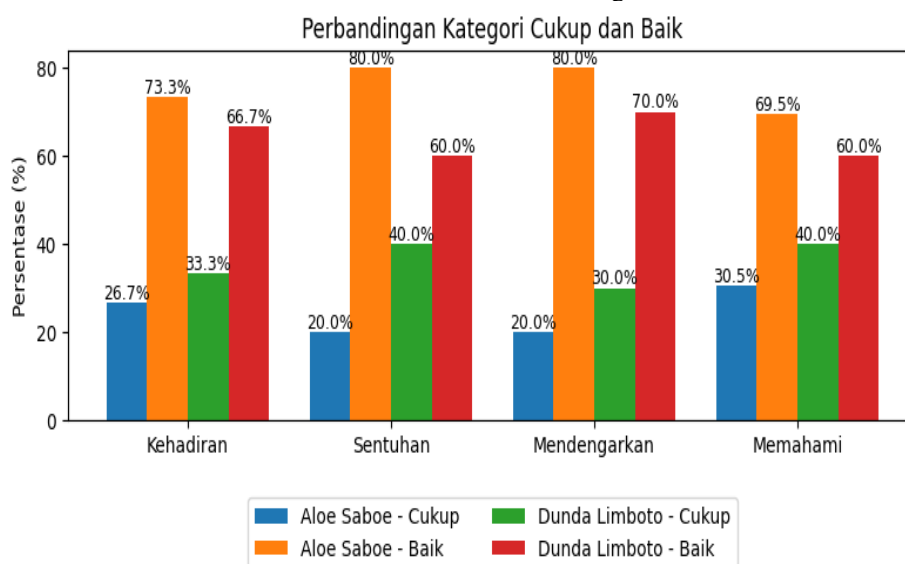
| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Final Education | SD | 12 (26,7) | 14 (31,1) |
| | Junior High School | 14 (31,1) | 15 (33,3) |
| | High School | 15 (33,3) | 12 (26,7) |
| | S1 | 4 (8,9) | 4 (8,9) |

(Source: Primary Data, 2026)

Based on Table 1, it shows that the characteristics of respondents in both hospitals are relatively similar, with the dominance of productive age and female respondents. However, the proportion of male patients at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital is higher than at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital. The education level of respondents in both hospitals was dominated by secondary education.

Univariate Analysis

Graph 1 compares the perception of caring nurses based on the 4 dimensions of caring, presence, touch, listening, understanding.



Comparative graph of patient perception of nurse caring behavior, based on the 4 dimensions of caring Presence, Touch, Listening, Understanding. Each indicator has 4 bars:

1. Aloe Saboe – Enough
2. Aloe Saboe – Good
3. Dunda Limboto – Enough
4. Dunda Limboto – Good

Table 2 Distribution of Patient Perceptions of Nurses' Caring Behavior in Two Hospitals (n = 90)

| Patient Perception | RS Aloe Saboe n (%) | Dunda Hospital Limboto n (%) |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Enough | 11 (24,4) | 16 (35,6) |
| Good | 34 (75,6) | 29 (64,4) |
| Total | 45 (100) | 45 (100) |

(source: Primary data 2026)

Based on the results of the univariate analysis in table 4.2, it is known that patients' perceptions of the caring behavior of nurses in both hospitals are mostly in the good category. At Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, as many as 34 respondents (75.6%) assessed the caring behavior of nurses in the good category, while 11 respondents (24.4%) were in the adequate category. Meanwhile, at dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital, as many as 29 respondents (64.4%) assessed the caring behavior of nurses in the good category and 16 respondents (35.6%) were in the adequate category. In general, these results show that patients' assessments of nurses' caring behavior in both hospitals tend to be positive.

Bivariate Analysis

Comparison of patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior in the internal room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

Table 3. Results of the Mann-Whitney Test on Patient Perception of Nurse Caring Behavior in the Internal Room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

| Test Statistics | Value |
|------------------------|---------|
| Mann-Whitney U | 166,500 |
| Wilcoxon W | 601,500 |
| Z | -2,086 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | 0,037 |

(source: Primary data 2026)

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney test in Table 4.3, an Asymp value was obtained. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.037, which is smaller than the value of $\alpha = 0.05$. This shows that there is a statistically meaningful comparison between patients' perceptions of the caring behavior of nurses in the internal inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City, and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

Thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, which means that patients' perceptions of the caring behavior of nurses in the two hospitals differ significantly.

DISCUSSION

Univariate Analysis Results

Patient perception based on the dimension of nurse presence

Based on the results of univariate analysis in Graph 4.1 In the attendance indicator, it can be seen that the percentage of good categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital reached 73.3%, while at Dunda Limboto Hospital it was 66.7%. The percentage difference of 6.6% shows that the proportion of good category assessments at Aloe Saboe Hospital is slightly higher. Meanwhile, in the sufficient category, Dunda Limboto Hospital has a percentage of 33.3% and Aloe Saboe Hospital 26.7%. This comparison shows that in the attendance indicator there is a comparison of the distribution of patient assessments, where Dunda Limboto Hospital has a larger proportion of sufficient categories than Aloe Saboe Hospital. This condition shows that there is a variation in patient assessments related to the consistency of nurses' presence in providing services. In the perspective of Jean Watson's caring theory, the presence of nurses is one of the important aspects in building transpersonal caring relationships, which are relationships that involve authentic presence, full attention, and the ability of nurses to create a sense of security and comfort for patients (Watson, 2008a). The presence of nurses is not just about being physically present in the treatment room, but also reflects the willingness of the nurse to listen, understand the patient's needs, and provide emotional support during the healing process. A good assessment of this dimension shows that the patient views the nurse not only as the implementer of clinical measures, but also as a companion who plays an important role in helping the patient cope with the sick condition. The results of this study are in line with previous research which stated that the presence of nurses is the main indicator of caring behavior because patients tend to have higher trust when nurses show care and involvement during treatment. Research by Bawelle, Sinolungan, and Hamel (2021) shows that nurses' caring behaviors, including presence and attention, have a significant relationship with patient satisfaction levels. In addition, research by Daulay and Sitanggang (2023) confirms that the consistent presence of nurses can increase patient trust and strengthen therapeutic relationships in the inpatient room. Although most respondents gave good ratings, there were still patients who rated the presence of nurses in the category of adequate. This can be influenced by several factors, such as different patient expectations, the patient's emotional state during illness, and the uneven intensity of nurse interaction in each patient. According to Nursalam (2021), patients' perceptions are subjective and are greatly influenced by previous experiences and expectations of health services. In addition, workload factors and the high number of patients can also affect the limited time of nurses to always be by the patient's side (Daulay & Sitanggang, 2023). Thus, the results of this study show that the dimension of nurse attendance in both hospitals has been assessed well by the majority of patients. The presence of consistent and attentive nurses is one of the important elements in improving the quality of nursing services, strengthening therapeutic relationships, and supporting the patient's healing process holistically.

Patient Perception Based on the Nurse's Touch Dimension

Based on the results of the univariate analysis in Graph 4.1 On the touch indicator, the percentage comparison is clearer than other indicators. Aloe Saboe Hospital has a good category of 80.0%, while Dunda

Limboto Hospital is 60.0%, so there is a difference of 20%. In the sufficient category, Dunda Limboto Hospital reached 40.0% while Aloe Saboe Hospital reached 20.0%. This difference shows that the distribution of patient assessments on the touch indicator between the two hospitals has a fairly large proportional comparison. This indicates that on the touch indicator, there is a variation in the patient's experience of the form of physical attention given by the nurse during the service process.

Patient perception based on the patient's listening dimension

Based on the results of univariate analysis in Graph 4.1 In the listening indicator, the percentage of both categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 80.0% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital was 70.0%, with a difference of 10%. In the sufficient category, Aloe Saboe Hospital is 20.0% while Dunda Limboto Hospital is 30.0%. This comparison shows that the distribution of patient assessments on the listening indicator still has a relatively close pattern, but there is still a larger proportion of sufficient category comparisons at Dunda Limboto Hospital. This illustrates that the ability of nurses to provide attention through verbal communication has variations in perception among patients in both hospitals. In Watson's concept of caring, listening skills are part of therapeutic communication that plays an important role in building trust and meaningful relationships between nurses and patients (Watson, 2008a). Active listening can help patients feel valued, understood, and not overlooked. This is in line with the opinion of Rahayu, Astuti, and Nurhadi (2023) who stated that the quality of interpersonal communication, including listening skills, greatly affects patients' perception of caring nurses. However, there are still respondents who consider it enough to show that listening behavior has not been felt evenly by all patients. This condition can be affected by busy room situations, workload, and limited time for nurses to conduct in-depth communication. In certain conditions, nurses can focus more on completing clinical tasks so that the interaction of listening to patient complaints becomes less optimal.

Patient Perception Based on the Dimension of Understanding the Patient

Based on the results of univariate analysis in Graph 4.1 In the understanding indicator, the percentage of good categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 69.5% while Dunda Limboto Hospital was 60.0%, with a difference of 9.5%. In the sufficient category, Dunda Limboto Hospital is 40.0% and Aloe Saboe Hospital is 30.5%. This comparison shows that the distribution of patient assessments on the comprehension indicator has a pattern that is almost similar to other indicators, namely the proportion of the sufficient category at Dunda Limboto Hospital is higher than at Aloe Saboe Hospital. This variation shows a comparison of the proportion of patient perceptions related to the ability of nurses to understand the patient's condition and needs. In Watson's theory, understanding the patient is part of caring that emphasizes respect for human dignity and the ability of the nurse to be empathetically present in the patient's situation (Watson, 2008a). Nurses who are able to understand patients not only look at the physical condition, but also pay attention to the patient's psychological and emotional state. Good perception of this dimension shows that the patient feels the care and attention of the nurse as a whole. However, there are still patients who assess enough on the dimension of understanding. According to Nursalam (2021), patients' perceptions can be influenced by the patient's expectations, previous experiences, and emotional state when being treated. In addition, time constraints and high workloads can cause nurses to not always be able to give optimal attention to all patients (Daulay & Sitanggang, 2023). Therefore, there is a need to make efforts to improve the consistency of caring so that all patients can feel understanding behavior equally.

Patient perception of the caring behavior of nurses of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital in Gorontalo City and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital

Based on the results of the univariate analysis, the majority of patients in the internal inpatient room of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital Gorontalo City and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital have a good perception of the caring behavior of nurses. These findings show that in general nurses in both hospitals have been able to display nursing behaviors that are not only clinically action-oriented, but also attentive to emotional, psychological, and interpersonal aspects during the treatment process.

At Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, the dominance of the good category indicates that the interaction between nurses and patients has taken place in a positive and meaningful manner. Patients consider that nurses are able to show empathy, pay attention, and be present in the treatment process professionally. Meanwhile, at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital, although the majority of patients also gave good assessments, the proportion of perception was relatively higher than that of Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital. This shows that there is a variation in the consistency of the application of caring behaviors felt by patients. In the perspective of Jean Watson's (2008) caring theory, caring is the core of nursing practice that emphasizes the transpersonal relationship between nurse and patient. Caring is not only judged by the nursing actions performed, but also by how the actions are presented humanely, empathetically, and respectfully with individual dignity. The dominance of good perception in both hospitals reflects that most nurses have implemented basic caring values, such as therapeutic communication, authentic presence, and concern for patient needs holistically.

However, the discovery of sufficient perception categories in some patients, especially at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital, shows that the transpersonal caring dimension has not been fully felt evenly. Patients'

perceptions are subjective and are influenced by expectations, previous experiences, and emotional states during treatment. Patients with high expectations of service tend to give more critical assessments of nurse behavior. In addition to patient subjectivity factors, nurses' workloads and organizational conditions can also affect the quality of interactions. The high number of patients, limited manpower, and administrative pressure can cause nurses to focus more on completing clinical tasks rather than building deep interpersonal relationships. In these situations, caring behaviors are still carried out, but the emotional and therapeutic communication aspects may not be optimally felt by all patients. As a referral hospital and teaching hospital, Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital faces complex service demands. Nonetheless, the dominance of good perception suggests that nurses are able to maintain a balance between the technical demands and humanistic values of nursing. Meanwhile, at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital, univariate results illustrate that caring practices have gone quite well, but still need to be strengthened in the aspects of emotional presence, empathy, and therapeutic communication so that patients' positive perceptions can increase more evenly. Overall, the results of this study confirm that caring behavior has become an important part of nursing practice in both hospitals. However, to achieve a consistent implementation of caring in accordance with the transpersonal concept proposed by Watson, continuous efforts are needed in improving the quality of communication, workload management, and strengthening humanistic values in nursing services.

Analysis of the Caring Dimension based on patient perception

Patients' perception of nurses' caring behavior in this study was measured through several main dimensions, namely presence, touch, listening ability, and the ability to understand the patient's condition. These four dimensions represent the real manifestation of caring in daily nursing practice.

a. Nurse presence

The presence of nurses is a fundamental dimension in caring, as it reflects the willingness of the nurse to be "fully present" for the patient, both physically and emotionally. Attendance not only means being by the patient's side, but it also shows care, preparedness, and active involvement in the interaction. (Watson, 2008)

The results of the study showed that most patients felt the presence of nurses in the good category, especially at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital. However, there are still patients who consider the presence of nurses in the sufficient category, especially at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital. This condition can be associated with the workload of nurses and the intensity of services in the inpatient room. Research (Rahayu, et al, 2023) stating that the presence of a consistent and responsive nurse is closely related to the patient's sense of security and trust. When nurses are frequently present and easily accessible, patients tend to rate nurses' caring behavior higher. Conversely, a nurse's delay or absence when needed can lower the perception of care, even if nursing actions are well done.

Therapeutic Touch

Touch is a form of nonverbal communication that has an emotional and therapeutic meaning in nursing. The right touch can provide comfort, reduce anxiety, and strengthen the nurse-patient relationship (Kozier, et al. 2022).

In this study, therapeutic touch is still a relatively variable dimension in patient perception. Some patients stated that the nurse's touch did not fully provide a sense of calm and emotional support. This is in line with the findings (Daulay, W., & Sitanggang, 2023), which mentions that in conditions of high workload, nurses tend to limit touch only to procedural aspects, not as a form of emotional support. In fact, according to Watson 2009 in (Khoiri et al., 2024) Touches accompanied by empathy and mindfulness are an important part of caring that is transpersonal. Touch not only serves as a technical act, but also as a means of building emotional closeness and trust of patients.

Listening skills

Listening skills are at the core of therapeutic communication and are an important indicator of nurses' caring behavior. Active listening means giving full attention to the patient's complaints, feelings, and needs without judgment (Potter, P. A., & Perry, 2021). The results showed that patients who felt listened to tended to have a good perception of the caregiver's caring behavior. In contrast, patients who feel their complaints are not being paid attention to tend to give an adequate assessment. These findings are in line with research (Suryani, N., et al) found that the quality of nurses' listening was the main predictor of patients' perception of care. In this context, listening skills are not only a matter of time, but also the attitude and communication skills of nurses. Nurses who are able to show empathy through verbal and nonverbal language will find it easier to build meaningful therapeutic relationships.

Ability to understand the patient's condition

Understanding a patient's condition includes understanding the patient's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual condition. This dimension requires the nurse to see the patient as a whole individual, not just an object of care. (Watson, 2008) Some of the patients in this study assessed that the nurses did not fully understand their

emotional and psychological condition. This condition can be affected by limited interaction time and nurses' focus on completing clinical tasks. According to (Arifin R. et al. 2023), the ability to understand patients holistically is greatly influenced by the nurse's work experience and organizational support in building a caring culture.

Bivariate Analysis Results

Comparison of Patient Perception of Nursing Caring Behavior between Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital

The results of bivariate analysis using the Mann–Whitney test showed that there was a statistically significant comparison between patients' perceptions of caring behavior of nurses at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital, Gorontalo City, and Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital, with a p value of 0.037 ($p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that although the two hospitals are within relatively similar geographical and cultural areas, patients' experiences of nurses' caring behaviors are not entirely identical.

Statistically, the Mann–Whitney test was used because the patient perception data was ordinal and came from two independent groups. According to Field (2018), this test is appropriately used to compare the median or distribution of scores between two groups when the assumption of normality is not met. Thus, significant test results showed that the distribution of patient perception in the two hospitals was significantly different, not coincidental. In the context of nursing, this comparison of perceptions has an important substantive meaning. The patient's perception of the caregiver's behavior is a reflection of the quality of the therapeutic relationship built during the treatment process. (Watson, 2008) emphasizing that the care felt by patients is not only influenced by the individual competence of nurses, but also by the organizational system, work culture, and health service environment.

Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital shows a higher proportion of good perception than Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital. This can be interpreted as an indication that the nursing care practice at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital is more consistently felt by patients. This consistency is key in building a positive and sustainable care experience. On the other hand, although the majority of patients at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital also have good perception, a higher proportion of sufficient perception indicates a variation in patient experience. This variation can reflect inconsistencies in caring behavior between nurses, between shifts, or between service situations. According to Swanson (1991) in (Sari, N., et al. 2021), inconsistent care can cause patients to feel "adequate" services, but have not yet reached a "meaningful" level.

Comparative Interpretation of Perception in the Framework of Caring Theory

In Jean Watson's theory of care, the nurse–patient relationship is seen as a transpersonal relationship that goes beyond technical interactions. Caring is a holistic process, covering physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions (Watson, 2008). Therefore, the comparison of patients' perceptions of nurses' caring behavior can be interpreted as a comparison in the quality of transpersonal relationships built in the two hospitals.

Better patient perception at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital can show that nurses are better able to present authentic presence, empathy, and therapeutic communication consistently. This is in line with research (Lestari, et al. 2021) which found that hospitals with a strong caring culture tend to produce a more positive perception of patients towards nursing services. On the other hand, the relatively lower patient perception at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital may indicate that caring behavior is still more focused on fulfilling clinical tasks than on emotional relationships. Watson (2009) calls this condition "task-oriented" care, where nursing actions are carried out technically correctly, but have not yet fully presented a humanistic dimension.

Swanson (1991) in his theory of caring emphasizes five processes of caring, namely knowing, being with, doing for, enabling, and maintaining belief. Comparison of patient perceptions can arise when one or more of these processes have not been optimally implemented. For example, the nurse may have done a good "doing for", but has not fully presented the "being with" emotionally.

Organizational Factors and Work Environment as Comparative Explainers

The comparison of patient perceptions of nurses' caring behavior between the two hospitals cannot be separated from organizational factors and the work environment. According to Nursalam (2021), the quality of nursing services is greatly influenced by the nurse–patient ratio, workload, management system, and leadership support for caring practices.

Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital as a referral hospital and teaching hospital generally has a more structured nursing management system, including clinical supervision and continuous professional coaching. This condition can support nurses in maintaining caring behavior even though they are under high work pressure. Meanwhile, Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital as a regional hospital with limited resources may face greater challenges in maintaining consistency of caring behavior. Research by Nugroho et al. (2022) shows that the limited number of nurses and the high workload can reduce the quality of interpersonal interaction between nurses and patients. In addition, the comparison of organizational culture also plays an important role. An organizational culture that places caring as a core value will encourage nurses to integrate empathy and therapeutic communication in every action. On the other hand, a culture that is too focused on efficiency and work targets has the potential to reduce the space for nurses to present caring as a whole (McCance & McCormack, 2021).

Clinical and Practical Meaning of Statistical Test Results

The results of the Mann–Whitney test showing significant comparisons are not only statistically significant, but also have clinical and practical implications. Comparing patient perceptions of nurses' caring behaviors can have an impact on patient satisfaction levels, trust in hospitals, and patient adherence to treatment plans.

According to research by Alharbi et al. (2020), a positive perception of caring is associated with increased patient satisfaction and better treatment outcomes. Therefore, the comparison of perceptions found in this study is an important basis for hospital management to evaluate and improve nursing practices. It should be emphasized that this comparison is not intended to judge any hospital negatively, but rather as an objective reflection on the patient experience. The results of this study can be used as material for evaluating the quality of nursing services and planning interventions to improve caring that are more targeted.

Comparison of Patient Perception Based on Nurse Presence Dimension

The nurse's presence dimension is a key aspect in caring behavior because it represents the physical and emotional involvement of the nurse in the care process. The results of the comparison of patient perceptions showed that the dimension of attendance was more consistently felt positively by patients at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital than at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital. This comparison reinforces the findings of the Mann–Whitney test which stated that there was a significant comparison of perceptions between the two hospitals.

According to Watson (2008), authentic presence is the foundation of a transpersonal relationship, where the nurse is not only present to perform actions, but also to be "with" the patient in his or her pain experience. The presence felt by the patient creates a sense of security and trust, which ultimately affects the perception of the quality of nursing services. Research by McCance and McCormack (2021) shows that consistent nurse attendance is strongly influenced by organizational system and culture support. Hospitals with a work system that allows nurses to have enough interaction time with patients tend to produce a better perception of caring. This may explain why patients at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital more often report the presence of nurses in the good category. Conversely, resource constraints and high workloads can reduce the frequency and quality of nurse attendance on the patient side. In such conditions, the patient may still receive nursing care, but may not always feel the emotional presence of the nurse. This condition has the potential to reduce the perception of caring in some patients at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

Comparison of Patient Perception Based on Therapeutic Touch Dimension

Therapeutic touch is a form of nonverbal communication that has emotional power in nursing practice. The results showed that patients' perceptions of nurses' therapeutic touch differed between the two hospitals, with a tendency to have more positive perceptions at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital.

According to (Kozier, et all 2022), touch performed with mindfulness and empathy can lower patient anxiety, increase comfort, and strengthen the nurse–patient relationship. In this context, comparative therapeutic touch perception can reflect comparisons in nurses' approaches to affective aspects of nursing. Research by Alharbi et al. (2020) found that patients value touch that is accompanied by attention and communication, rather than touch that is mechanical and procedural. If the touch is done only as part of a technical procedure, then its therapeutic value is likely not to be felt optimally by the patient.

Comparison of perceptions in this dimension can also be influenced by cultural factors and the patient's personal comfort. However, the better consistency of perception at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital indicates that the therapeutic touch at the hospital is more often combined with communication and empathy, so that it is felt more meaningful by patients.

Comparison of Patient Perception Based on Listening Ability Dimension

Listening skills are at the core of therapeutic communication and are an important indicator of nurses' caring behavior. The results of the comparison showed that patients at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital tended to have a better perception of nurses' listening skills than patients at Dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital.

Potter and Perry (2021) affirm that active listening allows nurses to understand patients' needs and concerns more deeply. Patients who feel listened to will be more open in submitting complaints and more trusting the nurse. This has a direct impact on the perception of caring and patient satisfaction. Research by Suryani et al. (2024) shows that nurses' failure to listen actively is often caused by time constraints and work pressure. In these conditions, communication tends to be one-way, so the patient feels less cared for. Comparison of perceptions on this dimension can be a reflection of the comparison of workload and time management of nurses in the two hospitals.

Comparison of Patient Perception Based on the Dimension of Ability to Understand the Patient's Condition

The dimension of understanding the patient's condition reflects the nurse's ability to see the patient as a whole individual, covering physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. The results showed that there was a

comparison of perceptions in this dimension between the two hospitals, which contributed to the comparison of overall caring perceptions. Watson (2009) stated that understanding patients holistically is the essence of transpersonal caring. When the nurse is able to understand the emotional and psychological state of the patient, the patient will feel valued and recognized as a whole human being. Conversely, if the nurse's attention is more focused on the physical aspect, the patient is more likely to rate caring in the category of adequate. Research by Arifin et al. (2023) shows that nurses' ability to understand patients' conditions is greatly influenced by work experience, training, and organizational support. Hospitals that provide communication and caring training on an ongoing basis tend to produce a more positive patient perception in this dimension.

Integration of Statistical Findings and Theoretical Meaning

The integration between the results of the Mann–Whitney test and the analysis of each dimension of caring shows that the comparison of patient perception of the caregiver's caring behavior is not a single phenomenon, but rather the result of the accumulation of various dimensions of caring behavior. The statistically significant comparison reflects a real comparison in the patient's experience during treatment at the two hospitals. In the framework of Swanson's (1991) theory, caring is a dynamic process that is influenced by the context of the caregiver's relationship, environment, and individual. When one of the dimensions of caring is not implemented optimally, the perception of caring as a whole will be affected. The findings of this study support this view and confirm the importance of a holistic approach in improving the quality of care.

Practical Implications of Bivariate Results

The results of this bivariate discussion have important implications for nursing practice and hospital management. The comparison of patient perceptions shows the need for a more targeted care improvement strategy, especially in the dimension that is still considered sufficient by the patient.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the comparison of patient perception of the caring behavior of nurses at Prof. Dr. H. Aloe Saboe Hospital and dr. M.M. Dunda Limboto Hospital which included indicators of presence, touch, listening, and understanding, an image was obtained of a comparison of the proportion of patient assessments in each indicator in the two hospitals. In the attendance indicator, the percentage of good categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital was higher (73.3%) than Dunda Limboto Hospital (66.7%), while the sufficient category at Dunda Limboto Hospital was larger (33.3%) than Aloe Saboe Hospital (26.7%). In the touch indicator, the comparison shows the largest difference, where the category of both at Aloe Saboe Hospital is 80.0% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital is 60.0%, while the category of sufficient at Dunda Limboto Hospital (40.0%) is higher than at Aloe Saboe Hospital (20.0%). In the listening indicator, the good category at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 80.0% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital was 70.0%, while the sufficient category was 20.0% and 30.0%, respectively. In the understanding **indicator**, the good category at Aloe Saboe Hospital was 69.5% and at Dunda Limboto Hospital was 60.0%, while the sufficient category at Dunda Limboto Hospital (40.0%) was larger than Aloe Saboe Hospital (30.5%). Overall, the results of the study showed that in the four caring indicators, the percentage of good categories at Aloe Saboe Hospital was higher than at Dunda Limboto Hospital, while the percentage of sufficient categories at Dunda Limboto Hospital was higher than at Aloe Saboe Hospital. The largest comparison is found in the touch indicator, while the smallest comparison is in the presence indicator.

SUGGESTIONS

It is hoped that the hospital can consider the results of this research as input in efforts to improve the quality of nursing services. Strengthening nurses' caring behavior can be done through continuous coaching, therapeutic communication training, and the creation of a work environment that supports patient-oriented nursing services.

Nurses are expected to maintain and continue to develop caring behaviors in providing nursing care to patients. An attitude of presence, listening ability, empathy, and understanding of the patient's physical and emotional condition are expected to remain an important part of daily nursing practice.

Nursing education institutions are expected to utilize the results of this research as reference material in the learning process, especially in strengthening the values of caring and therapeutic communication, both through theoretical learning and clinical practice.

This research is expected to be an initial reference for future researchers. The next researcher is advised to develop a study with a wider scope of sample and location, as well as add other variables related to the caring behavior of nurses, so that a more comprehensive picture is obtained.

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