

# COUNSELOR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN AN EFFORTS TO OVERCOME DEPENDENCE AND IMPROVE THE SUCCESS OF DRUG ABUSE PATIENTS AT THE BHAYANGKARA MEDAN DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION REHABILITATION INSTITUTION

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## Abstract

*Drug abuse is a serious problem that affects the health and well-being of individuals. At the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute, counselors' interpersonal communication strategies play an important role in the patient rehabilitation process. However, there have been few studies exploring the effectiveness of these strategies in overcoming addiction. This study aims to identify and analyze the interpersonal communication strategies used by counselors in overcoming addiction and increasing the success of drug abuse patient rehabilitation. How do the interpersonal communication strategies implemented by counselors affect the success of patient rehabilitation at the institution? Method This study used a qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques with counselors and patients at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and relationships between communication strategies and rehabilitation outcomes. The results showed that counselors used communication strategies such as empathy, active listening, and building trusting relationships. These strategies have been shown to be effective in increasing patient engagement and reducing stigma, which in turn increases the success of rehabilitation. Appropriate interpersonal communication strategies are essential for the success of drug abuse patient rehabilitation. Further training is needed for counselors to improve their communication skills. In addition, institutions are also advised to conduct regular evaluations of the effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented.*

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal communication, counselor, drug dependence, rehabilitation, communication strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is an increasingly pressing problem in various parts of the world, including in Indonesia. This phenomenon not only affects the individuals involved, but also has far-reaching consequences for families, communities, and society as a whole. Drug addiction is a complex, multifaceted problem, affecting individuals physically, psychologically, and socially. Therefore, handling drug addiction requires a holistic and integrated approach. One very important aspect in the rehabilitation process is interpersonal communication between counselors and patients. At the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute, counselors have a crucial role as liaisons and supporters in the patient's rehabilitation journey. They are not only responsible for providing guidance and support, but also for building strong relationships with patients. A good relationship between counselor and patient is essential to creating an environment that supports the recovery process. Effective communication can be a powerful tool in achieving this goal. Interpersonal communication strategies implemented by counselors play an important role in building trust and increasing patient engagement. This study shows that an empathetic and responsive

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communication approach can reduce patient resistance, facilitate a better understanding of the rehabilitation process, and increase patient motivation to actively participate in the program. In this study, communication is not just about conveying information, but also an interactive process that involves feelings, empathy, and support. However, at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute, counselors face various challenges in communicating with patients. These challenges can arise from the diverse social, cultural, and psychological backgrounds of patients. For example, patients with mental health disorders or a history of trauma may have difficulty communicating or understanding instructions from counselors. This shows the importance of counselors to have good interpersonal communication skills and be able to adjust their approach according to the individual needs of patients.

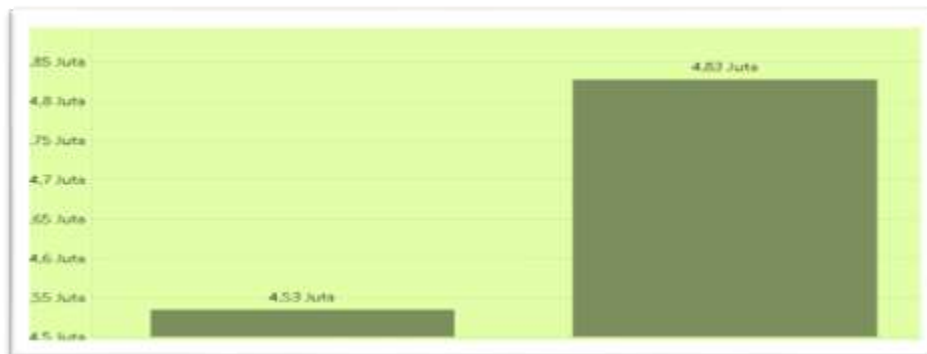
The researcher conducted this study to analyze and identify interpersonal communication strategies used by counselors, as well as their impact on the success of drug abuse patient rehabilitation. By exploring various communication approaches, it is hoped that counselors can improve the effectiveness of their interactions with patients. This is important not only for the success of individual rehabilitation, but also for improving the overall rehabilitation system. Counselors when carrying out the interpersonal communication process is a process of interaction between individuals that involves the exchange of information, feelings, and ideas. In the context of rehabilitation, interpersonal communication between counselors and patients becomes very important. Counselors must be able to create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere so that patients feel safe to share their experiences and feelings.

Active listening skills, empathy, and the ability to provide constructive feedback are some of the key elements of effective interpersonal communication. Counselors need to use communication strategies that are appropriate to the needs and characteristics of the patient. For example, younger patients may be more responsive to a more relaxed and informal approach, while older patients may appreciate a more formal and structured approach. By understanding the patient's background and needs, counselors can adjust the way they communicate to increase patient involvement in the rehabilitation process. Challenges in Interpersonal Communication Although interpersonal communication has great potential in supporting patient rehabilitation, counselors at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute are faced with various challenges. One of them is resistance from patients. Some patients may be skeptical of the rehabilitation process or feel embarrassed to share their experiences. In these situations, counselors need to use an empathetic approach to reduce resistance and build trust.

This can be done by demonstrating understanding and support for the patient's experience, and creating a safe and supportive environment. Another challenge is the differences in the patient's social and cultural background. Each individual has different life experiences that affect how they communicate and understand information. Counselors need to be sensitive to these differences and be able to adapt to the needs of each patient. This also includes understanding the social stigma that is often attached to individuals who experience substance abuse, which can affect how they interact with the counselor. This study aims to identify and analyze interpersonal communication strategies used by counselors at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute.

This study is expected to provide valuable insights for rehabilitation institutions in developing better training programs for counselors. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to improve the quality of interaction between counselors and patients, thereby increasing the overall success of rehabilitation. By focusing on effective interpersonal communication strategies, this study will not only contribute to the understanding of the drug rehabilitation process, but will also provide practical recommendations to improve counselor skills in communicating with patients. This in turn is expected to have a positive impact on patients, counselors, and the rehabilitation system as a whole. Counselors during the counseling process for some time facing drug addiction problems, effective interpersonal communication between counselors and patients is very important to achieve successful rehabilitation. Communication strategies implemented by counselors must be able to build trust, increase patient involvement, and reduce resistance. Despite the various challenges faced, this study

aims to provide insight into effective communication strategies in the context of rehabilitation. Thus, it is hoped that this study can contribute to increasing the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and assist patients in achieving sustainable recovery.



**Figure 1: Matrix of the Increase in the Number of Drug Users in Indonesia Source: BNN (2021)**

A counselor in the eyes of patients and families of drug abuse patients, is a figure who has a very important role in the recovery and rehabilitation process. They are seen as a source of trustworthy support, who helps patients understand and overcome the challenges faced due to drug abuse. Counselors are considered good listeners, who are able to provide appropriate advice and effective strategies in dealing with problems. They are also considered as guides on the journey of recovery, who help patients and their families navigate the complexity of problems associated with drug addiction. The willingness of counselors to listen, understand, and provide emotional support makes them a very meaningful figure in the process of patient recovery and rebuilding relationships with families. Ego and superego systems. (Sumarto, 2012).

**Table 1: Number of Drug Consumers in Indonesia**

KOMPONEN PERBANDINGAN	2008	2011	2014	2017
Jumlah Konsumen <sup>a</sup> (per Total Penduduk Indonesia Berusia 10-59 tahun)	3,1-3,6 juta (1,5%)	3,7-4,7 juta (2,2%)	3,8-4,1 juta (2,1%)	3,0-3,7 juta (1,7%)
Konsumen Teratur	894.490	1.910.294	1.482.827	920.100
Jumlah Konsumen Coba-coba	872.928	1.159.649	1.624.026	1.908.319
<b>Biaya Kerugian Individual</b> (dalam jutaan rupiah)				
Konsumsi Narkoba	15.376.071	17.542.841	42.945.590	69.848.128
Over Dosis	22.124	204.934	12.932	151.925
Detoksifikasi dan Rehabilitasi	1.094.519	1.336.956	157.483	11.952
Pengobatan Sendiri	19.688	911.357	223.907	1.377.568
Kecelakaan	323.220	2.835.586	163.878	656.397
Urusan dengan Penegak Hukum	882.602	11.019.744	1.152.328	1.824.935
Urusan terkait Penjara	839.813	2.923.736	1.028.117	2.003.957
Aktivitas yang Terganggu	188.705	1.002.678	244.352	505.861

(Source: BNN 27 December 2021)

## THEORETICAL STUDY

### Interpersonal Communication

Communication is an eternal part of everyday life just like breathing in humans. As long as humans want to feel life, they will continue to communicate. In maintaining survival, humans really need communication. Communication activities are the most basic in human life, and this problem is especially in the process of socialization of society. As social beings, interaction between individuals can only achieve this through communication activities. As for interpersonal communication styles, namely: (Efendi Samosir, et all,. 2018). According to Everett M. Rogers, communication is a process in which an idea or ideas are transferred from a source to one or more recipients with the aim of changing a person's behavior. Simply put, communication can be likened to a tool to influence others to act according to what is desired. Success in communication is greatly influenced by human understanding of the important elements that must be contained in communication. Because only through communication, the attitudes and feelings of a person or group of people can be understood



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by others. However, communication will only be effective if the message conveyed can be interpreted the same by the recipient of the message (Hermawan, 2012: 4).

**Counselor Interpersonal Communication Strategies**

Counselor interpersonal communication strategies include the ability to actively listen, demonstrate empathy, and build trust with patients, which are key to creating an environment that supports recovery." Johnson, M. (2020). "Effective interpersonal communication in counseling involves not only verbal but also non-verbal skills, which can affect the therapeutic relationship and rehabilitation outcomes." Smith, L.A., & Chen, Y. (2021). According to Brown, R., & Green, T. (2022) Counselors who adopt a responsive interpersonal communication approach can increase patient engagement and reduce resistance to the rehabilitation process.". "Empathy and active listening skills are two main pillars of effective interpersonal communication strategies to support patients in the recovery process." Garcia, P., & Torres, M. (2020). "Interpersonal communication training for counselors can improve their skills in interacting with patients, which ultimately has a positive impact on the success of rehabilitation." Lee, J., & Park, H. (2023).

**Interpersonal Communication Patterns**

Interpersonal communication patterns refer to the way individuals interact and exchange information, which is influenced by each individual's social, cultural, and psychological context." Smith, A. & Doe, J. (2020). Interpersonal communication does not only involve the exchange of verbal messages, but also includes non-verbal elements that play an important role in shaping communication patterns." Lee, H. & Kim, S. (2021). "Effective interpersonal communication patterns can improve relationships between individuals and facilitate problem solving in social and professional contexts." Johnson, M. (2022). "Interpersonal communication patterns encompass interactions that occur in a variety of contexts, including family, workplace, and social environments, and can affect an individual's psychological well-being." Garcia, R. & Martin, P. (2023). Adaptive interpersonal communication patterns can strengthen interpersonal relationships and increase individual engagement in social interactions." Brown, T. & White, L. (2020).

**The Purpose of Interpersonal Communication**

The purpose of Interpersonal Communication refers to the effectiveness of counseling (Irvin Yalom, 1970), such as better understanding of the problem, behavioral changes positive, or an increase in the client's psychological well-being. The effectiveness of counseling can be measured by looking at the changes that occur in the client during and after the counseling process. This can include behavioral changes, changes in attitudes, improvements in emotional well-being, or the achievement of established counseling goals. Determining factors that influence the effectiveness of counseling include the relationship between the counselor and the client, the quality of the counseling techniques used, the match between the counseling method and the client's needs, and the support and resources available to the client outside of the counseling session. Interpersonal communication strategies used by counselors with drug abuse patients include how the counselor interacts, listens, provides support, provides direction, provides feedback, and assists the patient in the rehabilitation process.

Examples of effective interpersonal communication strategies by counselors may include active listening techniques, providing positive reinforcement, building empathetic relationships, providing clear information about the consequences of drug use, and setting shared goals with the patient to achieve successful rehabilitation. Counselors need to increase patient motivation so that they actively participate in the rehabilitation process (William R. Miller & Stephen Rollnick, 1991). Providing encouragement, understanding the benefits of quitting drugs, strengthening self-confidence, and helping patients find a more meaningful reason or purpose in life outside of drug use. Strategies to increase patient motivation may include providing praise for progress, helping patients understand the negative consequences of their behavior, encouraging independence, and helping patients identify and overcome barriers that may hinder the rehabilitation process.

## Empathy Theory

The Theory of Empathy in Interpersonal Communication was developed by Carl R. Rogers, a humanistic psychologist, emphasizing the importance of empathy in the therapeutic relationship. In his article entitled "Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being" (1975), Rogers explained that empathy is one of the three core conditions necessary for an effective therapeutic relationship. Empathy allows the counselor to deeply understand the client's internal world, which is very important in the process of therapy and healing. In the context of drug abuse rehabilitation, interpersonal communication between counselor and patient plays a crucial role in the success of the recovery process. One of the key elements in this communication is empathy, which serves as a bridge to understanding and responding to the patient's emotional and psychological needs.

## Nonverbal Communication Theory

In the Routledge journal related to the latest theories and research in nonverbal communication, including the latest developments in the study of kinesics. Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist known as a pioneer in the study of nonverbal communication, has made significant contributions to our understanding of how body movements and facial expressions function as forms of communication. His concept of "kinesics" explains that nonverbal communication is often as important, if not more important, than verbal communication in interpersonal interactions. In the context of the study entitled "Interpersonal Communication Strategies of Counselors in Efforts to Overcome Addiction and Increase the Success of Drug Abuse Patients at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute," Birdwhistell's nonverbal theory is very relevant to understanding the dynamics of communication between counselors and patients and to formulating effective communication strategies in drug rehabilitation.

## Drug Rehabilitation

Drug rehabilitation is a process designed to help individuals overcome their addiction to illicit substances and restore their physical, mental, and social functioning. The rehabilitation process begins with an evaluation phase, where professionals, such as doctors and counselors, conduct a thorough assessment of the patient's condition. This evaluation includes physical, psychological, and social aspects to determine the most appropriate type of treatment. Next, the rehabilitation program often consists of medical and psychological therapies aimed at reducing withdrawal symptoms and encouraging behavioral changes. Medical therapy may involve the use of medications to manage addiction symptoms and support the recovery process. In this context, drug rehabilitation focuses not only on addiction treatment but also on developing the life skills necessary to maintain long-term recovery. With a comprehensive and integrated approach, drug rehabilitation can help individuals return to functioning productively in society.

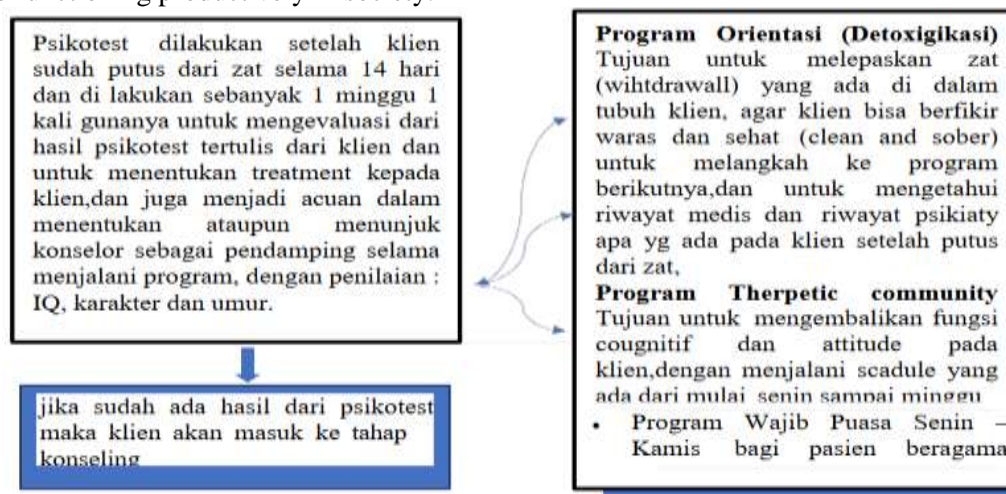
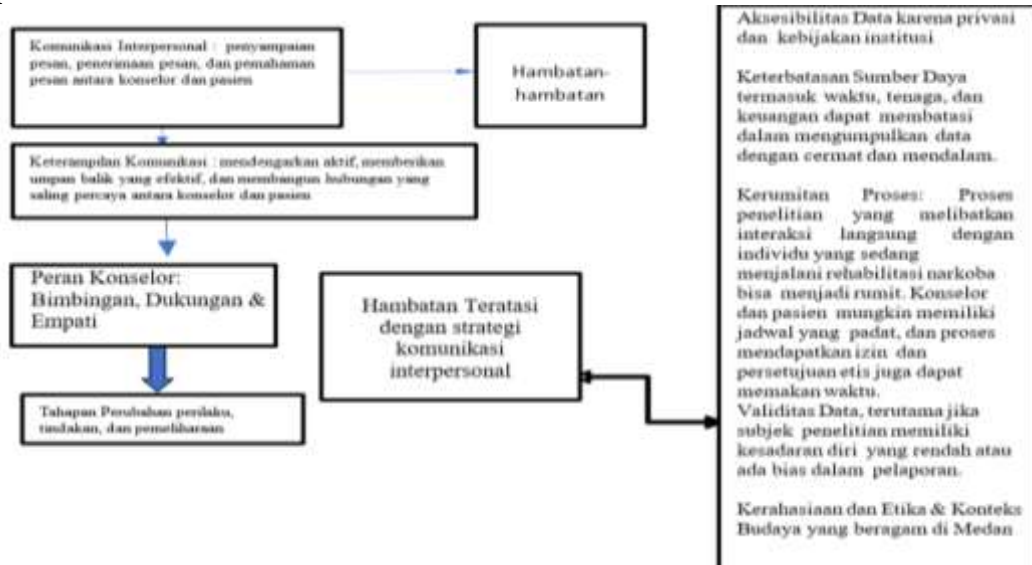


Figure 2: Rehabilitation Program Source: Field Research Results (2024)

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## Conceptual Framework



**Figure: Conceptual Framework Source: Researcher's results in the field (2024)**

The conceptual framework for this study will help visualize the relationships between key concepts related to interpersonal communication strategies in drug abuse rehabilitation. Using this framework, researchers can identify important variables that influence the interaction between counselors and patients, and how effective communication can increase patient engagement in the rehabilitation process. In addition, this framework also allows researchers to examine the impact of different communication approaches on rehabilitation outcomes, such as reducing resistance and increasing patient motivation. Thus, this framework serves as an important tool for understanding the complexity of the relationships between variables in the context of rehabilitation, as well as providing a basis for developing more effective strategies to increase the success of drug rehabilitation programs.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Researchers use qualitative methodology to explore the interpersonal communication strategies of counselors in drug abuse rehabilitation. This method allows researchers to explore experiences, perceptions, and interactions between counselors and patients in depth. According to Faustyna (Faustyna et al., 2023). Data collection in this study was conducted through periodic observation for a period of three months at the Bhayangkara Medan Narcotics Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute and conducting interviews to dig deeper into the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of counselors and patients as informants which were conducted once a month and Document Analysis Document analysis was conducted to complement the data obtained from observation and interviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Counseling Strategies Applied

By paying full attention to the patient, the counselor demonstrates empathy and understanding, which are essential foundations in the rehabilitation process. Active listening also helps patients feel valued and heard, making them more open to sharing their experiences and problems. Building trust is also a key strategy in interpersonal communication. Counselors should create a safe and supportive environment where patients feel comfortable sharing their problems and feelings. Trust can be built through consistency, honesty, and openness in communication. By building a strong relationship, patients are more likely to actively participate in the rehabilitation process and follow the advice given by the counselor. Another equally important strategy is providing constructive feedback. Counselors



should be able to provide positive and supportive feedback, and help patients recognize the progress they have made. Each patient has a different background, experience, and challenges, so counselors need to be flexible in implementing communication strategies. This tailored approach will increase the effectiveness of the intervention and help patients feel more involved in the rehabilitation process. By implementing effective interpersonal communication strategies, counselors at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute can help patients overcome their addiction and increase success in the recovery process. Good communication skills will create a supportive environment, which is critical to successful rehabilitation.

### **Counseling Planning and Management**

Discussion on Counseling Planning and Management Counseling planning and management are important aspects in the interpersonal communication strategy of counselors at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute. In the context of drug abuse rehabilitation, good planning allows counselors to provide effective and targeted interventions to patients, while proper management ensures that all aspects of counseling run smoothly and focus on the patient's recovery goals. First, counseling planning must begin with a comprehensive initial assessment. Counselors need to gather in-depth information about the patient's background, level of dependency, mental health conditions, and social factors that may affect the rehabilitation process. By understanding each patient's unique needs and challenges, counselors can design a customized intervention plan. This plan should include clear short-term and long-term goals, as well as concrete steps to be taken to achieve them. Furthermore, time management in counseling is essential to maintaining the effectiveness of counseling sessions. Counselors must manage their time well to ensure that each session lasts for an adequate and structured duration.

### **Interpersonal Communication Strategies Applied by Counselors**

#### **1. Approach to Patients**

One of the main strategies used is empathy. Through an empathetic approach, counselors try to deeply understand the feelings and needs of patients. By using gentle language and active listening, counselors can make patients feel heard and valued. This not only helps patients be more open in sharing their experiences and problems, but also creates an environment that supports their recovery. Empathy allows counselors to build deeper relationships with patients, which ultimately strengthens the effectiveness of the interactions and interventions carried out.

#### **2. Providing Emotional Support**

Counselors strive to build trust through transparent and honest communication. They maintain the utmost confidentiality of patient information, so that patients feel safe in opening up. This is important because trust allows patients to feel comfortable sharing things that may be very personal or difficult to share. Transparent communication also ensures that each interaction has a clear purpose, which is to support the rehabilitation process. By combining empathy, transparency, appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, and personalization of approach, counselors can create an environment that supports and empowers patients on their journey to recovery from drug addiction. These strategies not only help in overcoming challenges that arise during the rehabilitation process, but also play a vital role in achieving long-term success for patients.

### **Barriers and Challenges in Interpersonal Communication with Patients**

One of the major challenges faced by counselors is the emotional barriers that arise in their work with patients with severe addictions. Counselors often have to deal with frustration and emotional exhaustion, especially when dealing with patients who are highly resistant or who are regressing in their rehabilitation process. The pressure to maintain empathy while still setting the boundaries necessary for successful rehabilitation can be emotionally taxing for counselors. They must maintain a balance between showing empathetic support and ensuring that their interventions remain effective and disciplined. Overcoming these emotional barriers and communication barriers

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*Ratih Dwi Indah R<sup>1</sup>\*, Leylia Khairani<sup>2</sup>, Rahmanita Ginting<sup>3</sup>*

requires a great deal of patience, skill, and resilience from counselors. They must continually develop effective strategies to maintain their own emotional balance, while still providing the support that their patients need. In situations where communication barriers arise, the counselor's ability to adapt and find alternative ways to communicate becomes crucial. This not only helps to ensure that important messages are conveyed and understood, but also to build a stronger and deeper relationship between counselor and patient.

**Effectiveness of Strategies in Overcoming Addiction**

Counselors must be able to build a good relationship with patients through understanding and genuine support tend to get a more positive response. When counselors show understanding of the patient's feelings and needs, and provide consistent support, patients feel more valued and heard. This in turn makes patients more open to receiving help and more ready to participate in the rehabilitation program. By creating an environment full of empathy and support, initial strong resistance can be reduced, allowing patients to focus more on the recovery process. In addition, motivation and support from counselors play a very important role in maintaining patient commitment to the rehabilitation program. Counselors who are able to implement effective interpersonal communication can help patients overcome existing psychological barriers, increase their self-confidence, and ensure that they remain committed to the journey towards recovery. With the right approach, initial resistance can be transformed into positive collaboration, and patient motivation can be maintained until the end of the rehabilitation program, ultimately increasing the chances of long-term success.

**Implications of Findings for Counseling Practice**

Researchers found that developing counselors' interpersonal communication skills is an important priority in efforts to improve the effectiveness of drug rehabilitation. Based on research findings, counselors often face challenges in interacting with patients, especially when dealing with resistance and communication barriers. Therefore, it is important for rehabilitation institutions to develop training programs that focus on improving counselors' interpersonal communication skills that include various important aspects, such as active listening techniques, which allow counselors to better understand and respond to patients' needs. In addition, training in empathy is also crucial, because empathy is one of the keys to building a strong and supportive relationship between counselors and patients. Emotional management is also an important component of this training program, considering that counselors often have to deal with severe emotional stress when working with patients who are severely addicted. With good emotional management skills, counselors can maintain a balance between showing empathetic support and setting boundaries that are necessary for successful rehabilitation. In addition to developing training programs, rehabilitation institutions also need to adjust their communication strategies to be more adaptive and responsive to the needs of individual patients. Patients undergoing drug rehabilitation come from a variety of different cultural and social backgrounds, and their needs are also very diverse. Therefore, the communication strategy implemented must take these factors into account to ensure that the approach used is appropriate to each patient's condition.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

**Conclusion**

1. The researchers concluded that interpersonal communication strategies implemented by counselors at the Bhayangkara Medan Drug Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute were effective in overcoming addiction and increasing the success of patient rehabilitation. Through empathy, active listening, and building trust, counselors create a safe environment for patient openness. Careful planning and structured communication strengthen the intervention. Communication barriers such as differences in understanding, mistrust, and social stigma can hinder the effectiveness of counseling. However, counselors who are able to overcome these barriers through increased empathy and listening skills, succeed in strengthening relationships with



patients and increasing their participation, supporting optimal recovery success.

2. This study also shows the importance of flexibility in the communication strategies used by counselors. By adjusting the approach to the individual needs of the patient, counselors can optimize the support provided and ensure that the rehabilitation process is more effective in recovery.

### Suggestion

#### 1. Practical Advice

Practical suggestions for institutions related to interpersonal communication strategies used by counselors where the researcher suggests the Bhayangkara Medan Narcotics Abuse Prevention Rehabilitation Institute to implement strategic steps, including counselor training in interpersonal communication, development of communication modules, routine evaluations, reduction of social stigma, and provision of comfortable facilities, in order to increase the effectiveness of rehabilitation and patient success.

Practical Suggestions for Related Institutions Interpersonal communication barriers used by counselors include implementing practical steps, such as cultural awareness training, patient education programs, strengthening empathy in counselor training, anonymous feedback systems, stigma campaigns, and psychological support, to increase rehabilitation success and reduce communication barriers.

#### 2. Theoretical Suggestions

Researchers suggest the development of a theoretical framework that integrates interpersonal communication approaches in rehabilitation, in order to explore diverse strategies and improve rehabilitation success for patients with different backgrounds and mental health conditions.

#### 3. Academic Advice

Researchers suggest the development of training curricula for counselors in interpersonal communication skills, as well as multidisciplinary collaboration and longitudinal studies to improve the effectiveness of drug rehabilitation and patient recovery success.

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**COUNSELOR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN AN EFFORTS TO OVERCOME DEPENDENCE AND IMPROVE THE SUCCESS OF DRUG ABUSE PATIENTS AT THE BHAYANGKARA MEDAN DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION REHABILITATION INSTITUTION**

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