



Research Article

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The Relationship Between Operator Communication Skills and Patient Compliance in Undergoing Root Canal Treatment Procedures at RSGMP UNEJ

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Abstract

Background: Caries has a prevalence of 45.3% in Indonesia based on Basic Health Research (RISKESDAS) data. Untreated caries can develop into pulp disease that requires root canal treatment (conventional endodontics). Root canal treatment requires procedures in several visits, thus requiring patient compliance to complete the treatment series from examination to follow-up visits. Objective: This study aims to determine the relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment procedures at RSGMP UNEJ. Materials & Method: This study used an observational analytical method with a cross-sectional design. This study used two variables, namely operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment. Data on operator communication skills were obtained through questionnaires, while patient compliance data were obtained through reviewing patient card status. Results: Of the 30 respondents, the percentage of operator communication skills showed that 80% of operators were in the skilled category and 20% were in the less skilled category. A total of 28 of the 30 respondents were compliant patients, resulting in a percentage of 93.4% compliant patients and 6.6% non-compliant patients. Based on statistical tests, the Pearson Chi-Square value with Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) of 0.003 (<0.05). Conclusion: There is a relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP UNEJ.

Keywords: Operator Communication Skills, Patient Compliance, Root Canal Treatment.

INTRODUCTION

Based on the 2018 Basic Health Research (RISKESDAS), it was found that the most common dental problem experienced by Indonesians is cavities, or caries, with a proportion reaching 45.3% [1]. Caries requires treatment and maintenance efforts to maintain tooth function and aesthetics, which is part of dental conservation measure [2]. Dental conservation includes the treatment of caries, which is among the top 10 most common diseases in the community [3].

In Indonesia, the incidence of caries remains high with significant severity. However, this condition is often not prioritized in public health programs because it is not considered directly life-threatening. Untreated caries can progress to pulp disease, which can then trigger periapical disease. These pulp and periapical diseases can be addressed through endodontic treatment in the field of dental conservation [3].

Endodontic treatment is divided into conventional endodontic treatment and surgical endodontic treatment. One form of conventional endodontic treatment is root canal treatment, which aims to preserve the tooth in the oral cavity for as long as possible. Root canal treatment is performed to restore the infected tooth to a biologically acceptable condition for the surrounding tissues. This treatment procedure requires multiple visits, starting with the initial examination and continuing with follow-up, thus requiring high patient compliance [3].

Compliance is defined as an individual's willingness to follow the directions, recommendations, or treatment plan established by a healthcare professional. In root canal treatment, patient compliance is measured by their commitment to completing the entire treatment sequence up to the follow-up stage [4].

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The number of visits required is often a barrier, as some patients are reluctant to make multiple visits or lack an understanding of the importance of each treatment stage. One factor influencing patient compliance is communication between the dentist and the patient [3].

Effective communication plays a crucial role in successful treatment and helps patients resolve their health issues. However, dentists often feel they don't have enough time to communicate in-depth with patients, resulting in limited information that can impact the accuracy of the diagnosis and treatment plan. For patients, feelings of inferiority in front of the doctor can lead to a fear of asking questions or openly expressing concerns. Equal, open, and effective communication can encourage patients to express their concerns honestly and increase motivation and adherence to the treatment plan [5]. Information obtained through good communication also determines the level of patient compliance, which ultimately contributes to treatment success [6].

This study was conducted at the Dental and Oral Teaching Hospital of Jember University (RSGMP UNEJ), which serves as a teaching hospital for dental students. Based on data on visits to the conservation clinic for the period July–December 2023, there were 448 patients, with the highest number of visits for root canal treatment, namely 134 patients (30%). This study was conducted on patients undergoing root canal treatment at the RSGMP UNEJ Conservation Integration Clinic during the period August–December 2024. Based on this background, the researcher wanted to explore the relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment procedures at RSGMP UNEJ.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Objectives

This study aims to determine the relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in carrying out root canal treatment procedures at RSGMP UNEJ.

Location, Time, Population, and Research Sample

This study was conducted at the Dental and Oral Teaching Hospital (RSGMP) of Jember University, located in Sumpersari District, Jember Regency. The study was conducted from October to December 2024. The population of this study was all patients of the Conservation Integration Clinic (Integration II and III) of RSGMP, Jember University, from August to December 2024, totaling 97 patients. The subjects were patients of the Conservation Integration Clinic of RSGMP, Jember University, during that period who met the inclusion criteria, namely patients undergoing root canal treatment on a single tooth and willing to participate as research subjects. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula, resulting in a sample size of 30 patients.

Tools and Materials

The research measurement tools consisted of a questionnaire and a *checklist*. The questionnaire aimed to obtain data from respondents through several questions related to the communication skills of operators in root canal treatment. *The checklist* aimed to determine patient compliance through their attendance and follow-up of root canal treatment. Data on patient visit history in the Conservation Integration field of RSGMP, University of Jember is needed to determine the level of patient compliance.

Research Methods

This research was conducted after obtaining ethical clearance approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Jember, and official permission from the faculty and RSGMP UNEJ as the

research location. After the permits were completed, the researcher prepared all the necessary tools and materials, then selected the research subjects according to the inclusion criteria. The subjects were given a brief explanation of the questionnaire to be filled out, which consisted of two parts: the first part regarding the respondent's identity (name, age, and gender), and the second part regarding the assessment of the operator's communication skills in the field of dental conservation at the UNEJ Dental Hospital (RSGMP UNEJ). Furthermore, the research subjects also filled out a *checklist* related to the level of patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment. After all questionnaires and *checklists* were completed, the data were collected and processed for further analysis. The data method was carried out bivariate using the IBM SPSS Statistics application. Data analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between the two variables and used the *chi-square test*. This is because both variables in the study are ordinal scale and come from the same subject.

RESULT

Based on Table 1, the respondents in this study consisted of 11 people (36.7%) male and 19 people (63.3%) female. The age grouping of respondents was carried out according to the 2025 Ministry of Health (KEMENKES) guidelines, which divides age groups from teenagers (10–18 years) to the elderly (≥60 years) [7]. The distribution results show that 2 respondents (6.7%) are in the age range of 10–18 years, 28 respondents (93.3%) are included in the adult age group of 18–59 years, and there are no respondents aged ≥60 years.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Age

Characteristics	Category	Amount	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	36.7%
	Female	19	63.3%
Age	Teenagers: 10 - 18 Years	2	6.7%
	Adults: 18 - 59 Years	28	93.3%
	Elderly: ≥ 60 Years	0	0%

Table 2 shows that of the 30 respondents for question number 1 regarding the operator's delivery of information about the patient's dental health problems, the highest score was obtained in point 4, with 20 (66.7%) respondents saying they strongly agreed that the operator had conveyed information about the patient's dental health problems well. Question number 2 regarding the operator's delivery of the treatment objectives, the highest score was in point 4, with 16 (53.3%) respondents saying they strongly agreed that the operator had conveyed the treatment objectives well. Question number 3 regarding the operator's explanation of the treatment procedure, the highest score was in point 4, with 13 (43.3%) respondents saying they strongly agreed that the operator had explained the treatment procedures well.

Question number 4 regarding the operator's explanation of drugs and their side effects, the highest value in point 3 as many as 12 (40%) respondents said they agreed that the operator had explained the drugs to be used and the side effects that could arise. Question number 5 regarding the operator's delivery of the possibility of treatment success, the highest value in point 4 as many as 12 (40%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator had conveyed well about the possibility of treatment success. Question number 6 regarding the operator's delivery of possible complications after treatment, the highest values in point 4 as many as 12 (40%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator had conveyed well about the possibility of complications after treatment.

Table 2: Operator Communication Skills Based on Questionnaire

S. No.	Operator-Patient Communication	1	2	3	4
1.	The operator provides information about the patient's dental health problems.	0%	0%	33.3%	66.7%
2.	The operator conveys the purpose of the treatment to be performed.	6.7%	10%	30%	53.3%
3.	The operator explains the maintenance procedures.	16.7%	20%	20%	43.3%
4.	The operator explains about the medicines that will be used after treatment and the side effects that may arise.	0%	23.3%	40%	36.7%
5.	The operator explains the possibility of success of the root canal treatment.	10%	20%	30%	40%
6.	The operator informs about possible complications after treatment.	6.7%	20%	33.3%	40%
7.	The operator explains the behavior that the patient must carry out after the treatment/KIE procedure.	0%	0%	46.7%	53.3%
8.	Operators use language and speech that is easy to understand.	0%	20%	13.3%	66.7%
9.	Operators always report any developments in the disease condition.	6.7%	3.3%	36.7%	53.3%
10.	The operator still shows a calm facial expression and attitude.	10%	20%	26.7%	43.3%
11.	The operator asks again anything that is not clear.	3.3%	23.3%	26.7%	46.7%
12.	Operators perform examinations based on the patient's interests in recovery.	0%	0%	33.3%	66.7%
13.	The operator remains friendly	3.3%	13.3%	16.7%	66.7%

Scale = 1: Don't agree, 2: Disagree, 3: Agree, 4: Strongly agree

Question number 7 regarding the operator's delivery of IEC, the highest score in point 4 was 16 (53.3%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator had delivered IEC. Question number 8 regarding the language and speech used by the operator in communication, the highest score in point 4 was 16 (53.3%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator had used language and speech that was easy to understand. Question number 9 regarding the operator's delivery of every treatment development, the highest score in point 4 was 16 (53.3%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator had delivered every development that occurred during the treatment in full. Question number 10 regarding the operator's attitude and facial expression during treatment, the highest score in point 4 was 3 (43.3%) respondents said they strongly agreed that the operator always showed a calm facial expression and attitude during treatment.

Question number 11 regarding the operator asking again something that is not clear by the patient, the highest value in point 4 as many as 14 (46.7%) respondents said they strongly agree that the operator asks again to the patient what is not clear. Question number 12 regarding the examination carried out by the operator for the patient's recovery, the highest value in point 4 as many as 20 (66.7%) respondents said they strongly agree that the operator carries out the examination for the patient's recovery. Question number 13 regarding the operator's friendly attitude, the highest value in point 4 as many as 20 (66.7%) respondents said they strongly agree that the operator is friendly.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Operator Communication Skills

Variable	Category	Amount	Percentage
Operator Communication Skills	Skilled	24	80%
	Less Skilled	6	20%

Table 3 shows that out of 30 respondents, 24 (80%) respondents said that operators were skilled in communicating during treatment, and 6 (20%) respondents said that operators were not skilled in communicating during treatment.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution Based on Patient Compliance

Variable	Category	Amount	Percentage
Patient Compliance	Obdient	28	93,3%
	Not obey	2	6,7%

Table 4 shows that from 30 patient attendance data, 28 (93.4%) patients were compliant in carrying out all treatments, and 2 (6.6%) patients were not compliant in carrying out all treatments

Table 5: Respondent Frequency Based on Operator Communication Skills and Patient Compliance

		Patient Compliance		Total
		Obdient	Not obey	
Operator Communication Skills	Skilled	24	0	24
	Less Skilled	4	2	6
Total		28	2	30

Table 5 shows that of the 24 patients treated by operators with skilled communication skills, all demonstrated compliance with treatment procedures. Meanwhile, of the 6 patients treated by operators with less skilled communication skills, 4 were compliant and 2 were non-compliant.

Chi-Square Test Results

The results of data analysis to test the relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP using the *Chi-Square test* obtained a *Pearson Chi-Square value at Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)* of 0.003 (<0.05). This indicates that there is a significant relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP UNEJ. The results of the *chi-square test* of operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP UNEJ.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results and data analysis above, the operator's communication skills influence patient compliance in undergoing root

canal treatment. The respondents in this study were patients undergoing root canal treatment at the integrated dental conservation clinic at RSGMP, Jember University. Patients undergoing root canal treatment received information about their illness through communication conducted by the operator. Communication is the process by which someone conveys stimuli (usually linguistic symbols) to another person, not merely informing but also influencing one or several people to take certain actions (changing other people's behavior) [8].

Table 1 shows that 11 (36.7%) of the respondents in this study were male, and 19 (63.3%) were female. Gender can influence caries status, with women having a higher prevalence than men. This can be due to hormonal influences, dietary intake, psychosocial factors, and earlier tooth eruption in women, which results in a higher prevalence of dental caries in women than in men [9]. In addition, women have a higher level of anxiety than men, which makes them more likely to seek health care by visiting health services such as hospitals or community health centers when they are sick [10].

Table 1 also shows that the age of respondents who underwent root canal treatment at the age of 10-18 years was 2 (6.7%) respondents, the age of 18-59 years was 28 (93.3%) respondents, and the age of over 60 years was 0 (0%) respondents. This is in line with research conducted by Markus, Harapan and Raule (2020), stating that as age increases, the activity of leaving the house to study or work elsewhere increases and the busier it is, so that the time for regular dental check-ups is postponed or only checked if there are complaints of pain or swelling [11].

Question number 1, regarding the operator's delivery of information about the patient's dental health problems, received the highest response from respondents, namely "strongly agree" (66.7%). Operators convey health information with the basic purpose of providing comprehensive guidance on health issues to support the achievement of behaviors for healing. The information the operator knows and the patient's expectations about their disease are the right information to support compliance and treatment success [8]. According to research by Erni Djibu et al. (2021), there is an influence of the operator's role as an educator on patient compliance. The better the operator's role in conveying information, the more patient compliance in undergoing treatment. Patients will know the best way to manage their disease, thereby increasing awareness of adherence to care and treatment [12].

Question number 2, regarding the communication of the treatment objectives to be carried out by the operator, received the highest number of respondents who strongly agreed (53.3%). Operators must have the ability to process and convey information to patients regarding the treatment objectives. Patients who understand the treatment objectives will better understand the importance of the dental care being performed. The information exchange process between the operator and patient is a determining factor in patient compliance and treatment success [13].

Question number 3, regarding the operator's explanation of treatment procedures, received the highest number of respondents who strongly agreed (43.3%). Operators must be able to process information to patients regarding the treatment procedures performed. This will increase patient trust and understanding of each stage of the treatment performed by the operator. This trust can influence patient compliance during treatment [13].

Question number 4, regarding the operator's explanation of the medications to be used after treatment and the potential side effects, received the highest number of respondents agreeing (40%). Explaining the medications to be used by patients can increase the effectiveness of disease healing, which supports patient compliance [14]. According to research by Utari Martiningsih et al. (2015) in the journal Erni Djibu (2021), a friendly operator attitude and providing explanations

regarding medications and the patient's illness significantly support patient compliance [12].

Question number 5 concerns the operator's explanation of the likelihood of success of root canal treatment. The results showed that the highest number of respondents strongly agreed (40%). Before treatment, the operator will explain the likelihood of success, which can increase patient confidence and assurance that the treatment will be successful, ensuring that patients follow each step of the procedure [15].

Question number 6, regarding the operator's information about the possibility of complications after treatment, received the highest response from respondents, namely strongly agree (40%). After treatment, the operator will procedurally provide instructions regarding dos and don'ts in an effort to avoid complications and contribute to the success of the treatment. Patients will show varying attitudes towards the dentist's instructions, some complying and some not. This compliance is influenced by the patient's knowledge. The better the operator's communication when providing explanations, the more compliant they will be with instructions and prevent complications, thus increasing the chance of successful treatment [15].

Question number 7, regarding the operator's explanation of the patient's post-treatment behavior/IEC, received the highest number of respondents with a strongly agreed response (53.3%). Communication, Information, and Education (IEC) is one way to improve patients' knowledge of post-treatment actions. IEC is one of many educational methods available and is also included in healthcare services. Knowledge of post-treatment actions is a key factor in improving treatment success. Therefore, a better understanding among patients is expected to help them change their behavior so that their condition can be controlled [16].

Question number 8, regarding operators using language and speech that is easy to understand, received the highest response from respondents, namely "strongly agree" (66.7%). In providing care, operators must be able to provide explanations regarding all matters related to the patient's illness. Clear and easy-to-understand explanations increase patient understanding of their health condition, thus encouraging them to comply with treatment properly [17].

Question number 9, regarding whether the operator always communicates any developments in the patient's condition, received the highest number of respondents who strongly agreed (53.3%). Operators consistently monitor the patient's progress, address any concerns or questions, and ensure patient satisfaction with the care provided. For example, dentists can follow up with patients after a procedure to ensure they are healing well and to address any concerns or questions they may have. This helps demonstrate that the operator cares about the patient's oral health. This demonstrated concern can influence patient compliance [18].

Question 10, regarding operators maintaining a calm facial expression and demeanor, received the highest number of respondents who strongly agreed (43.3%). Body language serves as a primary indicator of a person's feelings, encompassing elements such as tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and hesitation. Positive body language can enhance positive verbal communication, thus influencing patient compliance during treatment [18].

Question 11, regarding operators re-asking anything unclear, received the highest number of respondents with a strongly agreed answer (46.7%). Patients have the right to ask questions if anything remains unclear in the healthcare services provided. Ensuring correct understanding and avoiding miscommunication can impact the correct diagnosis and treatment. This also increases patient trust and compliance with care [19].

Question number 12 regarding Operators conducting examinations based on the interests of the patient's recovery, the highest response from respondents was strongly agree (66.7%). Based on the 2012 KODEKI article 10, a doctor's obligations to patients are stated that a doctor must act sincerely and use all their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the patient. Operators who give their all in patient care so that patients can feel the care given is for their recovery. This can increase patient trust and compliance [20].

Question 13, regarding operators remaining friendly, received the highest number of responses from respondents, namely "strongly agree" (66.7%). Friendliness demonstrated by operators can build trust and interpersonal relationships between operators and patients. This can foster patient comfort and compliance [18]. According to Akbar & Risky (2020), if operators have a friendly and polite attitude, they will receive a positive assessment from healthcare users. This is because, basically, everyone will like a service center where there are many friendly and polite people [21].

Operators who communicate skillfully demonstrate greater patient compliance with treatment. This occurs because effective communication allows patients to clearly understand procedures, feel valued, and receive comprehensive information regarding the goals and benefits of treatment. Easy-to-understand instructions build trust and comfort, thus increasing patient motivation to complete all planned treatment stages [18].

Operators with less skilled communication skills result in variable compliance, with some patients being compliant and others being non-compliant. Patients who remain compliant are generally influenced by internal factors, such as personal motivation to recover, previous experience with treatment, and concerns about worsening dental conditions if treatment is not completed. These factors can encourage patients to continue with procedures despite not receiving optimal information or education from the operator [22]. Conversely, non-compliance is usually caused by a lack of communication skills and clarity of information from the operator, as well as discomfort during the treatment process. A rushed and unfriendly operator can make patients feel unappreciated or ignored, ultimately decreasing their motivation to continue treatment [18].

The results of the chi-square test of operator communication skills on patient compliance $p = 0.003$. This indicates that there is a relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP UNEJ. Operator communication skills in treating patients must be able to explain information, goals and treatment procedures to be carried out, explain patient questions well, be friendly and calm, explain the development of the patient's disease condition, explain side effects and medications to be used, explain behavior that must be done after treatment. Operators are expected to be able to communicate effectively with patients so that patients will comply with root canal treatment procedures so that treatment can be maximized.

This aligns with research conducted by Yulianti et al. in 2022, which found a positive and significant relationship between doctor-patient interpersonal communication and treatment adherence in diabetes mellitus patients. This study concluded that better doctor-patient interpersonal communication resulted in better adherence to diabetes mellitus treatment [23].

Similar results were also demonstrated by a 2024 study by Arhani et al., which found that effective interpersonal communication between healthcare professionals and patients significantly improved patient compliance with tuberculosis treatment. This demonstrates the crucial role of communication between healthcare professionals in building trust that can encourage patient adherence to medical procedures [24].

Another study that is also in line with the results of this study is the study by Rumate et al., in 2023. This study stated that clear and adequate communication from the operator is very important to maintain patient compliance, especially when the stages of root canal treatment take place over several visits [3].

CONCLUSION

The results of the research conducted on patients of the conservation integration clinic at RSGMP UNEJ from August to December 2024, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between operator communication skills and patient compliance in undergoing root canal treatment at RSGMP UNEJ.

Conflicts of Interest

The author reports no conflicts of interest.

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