
**A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON TRUST AND COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS**

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Abstract: Trust and communication are very important between doctors and patients. They affect how satisfied patients are, if they follow their treatment and health tips. This study looks at how trust and communication work together in healthcare and how things like cultural and personal backgrounds affect them. This research finds that when doctors are kind, clear, and responsive; patients trust them more. Frequency of meeting the same doctor and seriousness of the disease also matter. Culture, health knowledge, and system limits also play a role. This research paper suggests various ways to build trust, such as training doctors in communication, teaching them about different cultures, and giving doctors enough time with patients. It also elaborates that more research is needed on how digital tools and Artificial Intelligence will change trust and communication in the health sector.

Keywords: Doctors, Patients, Trust, Communication, Healthcare.

Introduction: The relationship between doctors and patients is a key part of good healthcare. It has a big impact on how well patients do, how satisfied they are, and whether they follow proper treatment plans. Two important parts of this relationship are trust and communication. Trust means that the patients believe the doctor is skilled, honest, and cares about them. Communication means how doctors and patients share information, feelings, and what they expect from each other. This relationship is not just simple but also shaped by bigger cultural, social, and institutional factors. Good communication is very important for building trust. When doctors explain things clearly, listen carefully, and show understanding; patients feel respected and are more likely to trust their doctors. This trust helps patients talk openly about their symptoms, follow treatment advice, and take part in the decision-making about their care. On the other hand, poor communication leads to misunderstanding, unhappiness, and a lack of trust; which can harm health outcomes. However, trust and communication are not simple and are affected by many things like cultural backgrounds and rules of the healthcare

system. This study looks at how all these factors work together. It reviews recent theories and research to understand how communication builds trust, what affects this process, and what this means for the healthcare system. Knowing properly about these relationships can help improve the ways in which doctors and patients interact; leading to better health for everyone.

Literature Review: Trust and communication are very important in the relationship between doctors and patients. Many studies in health and social sciences have looked at this. Trust means that patients believe their doctor is skilled, caring, and honest (Mechanic and Meyer, 2000). When patients trust their doctors, they are usually happier with their care, more likely to follow medical advice, and often get better health results (Hall et al., 2001). On the other hand, when the patients don't trust their doctors; they may avoid visiting the doctors and get worse health results (Thom et al., 2004). Good communication is not just about sharing medical facts, but it also includes showing kindness, listening carefully, and making decisions together (Street et al., 2009). Research shows that patients who think their doctor communicates well are more likely to trust them and follow their advice (Rao et al., 2007). If communication is poor, it can cause confusion, unhappiness, and mistrust (Ong et al., 1995). Social and cultural backgrounds also play a vital role. For instance, people in rural areas might care more about feeling respected and about the way doctors talk to them (Krupat et al., 2001).

Theoretical Frameworks: This study uses two main ideas:

1. **Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT)** — This idea says that people understand and react to communication by thinking and feeling about it in social situations. It explains how the way people communicate affects when others see them as trustworthy.
2. **Trust Theory** — This idea says that trust grows when people interact many times and show they are reliable, skilled, and kind. It also looks at how things like risks people see can change how much they trust.

By combining these two ideas, this research paper looks at how communication affects trust and how other factors can change this connection.

Objectives:

1. To explore the relationship between doctor-patient communication and patient trust.
2. To analyze the mediating role of patient-physician consistency in this relationship.
3. To investigate the moderating effect of perceived threat of disease on the communication-trust link.
4. To examine the differences in these dynamics between urban and rural patient populations.

Methodology: This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between doctors and patients. Data were collected across one rural and one urban hospital from Balangir district (Odisha) using stratified random sampling to ensure demographic representation. A total of 100 participants were recruited, with stratification based on age, gender, and education level to capture socio-demographic diversity. Validated instruments were administered via face-to-face interviews. Here, the Doctors-Patients Communication Scale (Rao et al., 2007) measured clarity and empathy. Again, the Patient Trust Scale (Hall et al., 2001) measured competence and integrity.

Table-1 – Demographic Profiles of Participants:

Characteristics	Urban (n=50)	Rural (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Gender			
Male	27 (54%)	22 (44%)	49 (49%)
Female	23 (46%)	28 (56%)	51 (51%)
Age (Years)			
18-35	14 (28%)	11 (22%)	25 (25%)
36-60	18 (36%)	19 (38%)	37 (37%)
60+	18 (36%)	20 (40%)	38 (38%)
Level of Education			
Primary	10 (20%)	30 (60%)	40 (40%)
Secondary	25 (50%)	17 (34%)	42 (42%)
Tertiary	15 (30%)	03 (06%)	18 (18 %)

Positive Aspects:

1. **Building trust through good communication** – The study clearly shows that good communication is very important for building trust between doctors and patients. When doctors explain clearly and listen carefully, patients feel more confident in them. This means that communication is not just about sharing medical information, but it also includes giving good emotional support (Street et al., 2009 and Hall et al., 2001).
2. **Patient-Physician Consistency** – When patients and doctors understand each other and have mutual expectations, trust between them grows. It means that when both of them agree on what the problem is, how it should be treated, and what to expect; then their relationship becomes stronger. Good communication helps make sure everyone is on the same page.
3. **Influence of perceived threat of disease** – How much a patient feels threatened by a disease affects how they trust their healthcare provider. When patients don't feel much threatened or worried about their illness; good communication from the provider makes them trust the provider more. This means that when the health problem is not very serious, the way doctors and nurses talk to patients is even more important for building trust. So, using good communication can really help in trying

to prevent illness.

4. **Rural-Urban differences** – The differences between cities and villages show that culture affects what patients expect and how they build trust with doctors. Patients from rural areas care more about feeling safe and being respected because of their good cultural backgrounds. Understanding these differences helps healthcare workers talk to patients in ways that suit their needs; which can build more trust and make patients happier.
5. **Improving patient satisfaction** – Good communication helps build trust between both patients and doctors. When patients feel listened to and understood, they are more likely to follow medical advice and come for regular check-ups. This leads to better health conditions of people. It also shows that trust and good communication help patients feel more involved in their own care.
6. **Reducing health disparities** – By identifying the differences in communication preferences across urban and rural areas, the study contributes to addressing healthcare inequalities. By understanding these differences, healthcare workers can change the way they talk to patients to fit their needs. Such practices promote more equitable health services, especially in rural areas.

Negative Aspects:

1. **Limitation of communication in high-threat situations** – When people feel very threatened by a disease, they tend to trust their doctors less irrespective of how well the doctors communicate. In serious or emergency situations, patients are often more worried about the doctors' skills and the results of their treatments. It means that good communication may not help build trust as much in these highly stressed situations.
2. **Partial mediation and unexplored factors** – Patient-physician consistency only partly explains how good communication leads to trust. This means that communication is not the only thing that builds trust. Many other things like problems in the healthcare system, how doctors act besides just talking, how much people trust the hospital, and patients' past experiences—were not studied here, but they probably also affect trust a lot.
3. **Rural healthcare challenges** – There are some special problems in the rural healthcare sector as compared to cities. People from rural areas are highly concerned about respect and good behaviour. Also, most of the rural people have less educational qualifications, which can make it harder for them to talk with health workers. Because of this, even if doctors try to communicate better, it might not always build more trust between them.
4. **Methodological limitations** – This study looks at only one point in time, so we can't say for sure if good communication creates more trust. Since people answer questions about themselves, they might give answers that sound better than the truth. Because of this issue, we should be careful about applying these results to everyone and everywhere. To understand things better, further studies should be done over time by following various measures.

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5. **Language and cultural barriers** – When patients and doctors speak different languages, it can be harder for them to have a fruitful conversation. Patients may have trouble explaining their problems or understanding what the doctor says. Doctors might also misunderstand what the patient is trying to say. Differences in cultural values such as beliefs, values, and customs, etc. can make things even worse. This can lead to confusion, mistrust, or even the wrong treatment.
 6. **Health literacy and use of medical jargon** – Low health literacy and use of complex medical jargon can hinder effective doctor-patient communication. Many people don't know much about these terminologies, which can lead to confusion and unhappiness among the patients. Even people who are well educated can have trouble understanding difficult medical information. That's why it is important for doctors to use simple and clear language while talking to patients.

Recommendations for Betterment:

1. **Practice Active Listening** – Doctors should really pay attention when patients talk. They should make eye contact and not interrupt patients. This makes patients feel truly heard, which can foster the trust-building process.
2. **Use Clear Language** – Doctors shouldn't use complicated medical terms while talking with patients. They should explain the disease, tests, and treatment in easy-to-understand words. Using pictures or providing written information can help patients remember what was said.
3. **Show Empathy and Respect** – Doctors should always show kindness and respect while dealing with patients. They should try to see things from the patient's point of view. This helps to build trust and improves communication between doctors and patients.
4. **Be Culturally Sensitive** – Healthcare workers should understand and respect that people come from different cultural backgrounds. They should adapt their way of speaking to match the cultural context of the patients. This will lead to a more patient-centered healthcare system.
5. **Provide Communication Training** – All healthcare workers should undergo regular communication training programs to improve their interaction with patients. This includes learning about body language, understanding emotions, and handling disagreements. It helps them become more effective at meeting patients' needs.
6. **Ask for and Use Feedback** – Hospitals and clinics should regularly ask patients and staff how communication can be improved. They should use these suggestions to make meaningful improvements.

Summary of the Findings: This study looked at how trust and communication are connected between doctors and patients. The researchers interviewed 100 patients from both urban and rural hospitals. It was found that when doctors explained things clearly, listened carefully, and responded kindly, patients trusted them more. Patients who felt their doctors were good communicators were more satisfied and more likely to follow treatment advice. The study also observed that trust grew when doctors and patients understood each other and had

similar expectations. The perceived seriousness of illness also played a role: patients who were very worried about their illness cared more about the doctor's skills, while those less worried placed greater value on good communication. There were differences between urban and rural patients. People from villages cared more about being respected and valued their cultural traditions, while urban patients focused more on the doctors' communication skills. However, in both contexts, better communication led to stronger trust. The study also pointed out some challenges, like language and cultural differences, and patients' lack of health knowledge. Despite these challenges, the results show that doctors who communicate well and understand their patients' backgrounds can build more trust. This can help healthcare professionals make better decisions to improve care and strengthen relationships with patients.

To sum up, trust and good communication are closely linked and are both essential for a strong doctor–patient relationship. Overall, improving the communication skills of healthcare providers is vital for building trust and enhancing the quality of care for everyone.

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