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APPLICATION OF JEAN WATSON'S THEORY IN BREATHING EXERCISE INTERVENTION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Background: Jean Watson's Caring Theoryemphasizes an empathetic and humanistic relationship between nurses and patients. This literaturereview aims to examine the application of this theory in breathing exercisesas a holistic approach to improving the physical and psychological conditionof patients. Method: The method used was a database searchon PubMed and Google Scholar with a publication periodrange of 2015-2025. Results: The results show that exercises such as slow deepbreathing, diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation,and finger hold relaxation are effective in reducing blood pressure and anxietyand improving lung function and quality of life. Conclusion: The collaborationbetween Jean Watson's Caring theory and breathing exercises can strengthen the holistic aspectof nursing, create a therapeutic environment, and accelerate the physical and psychological recoveryof patients.

Keywords

Breathing Exercises, Caring Behavior, Jean Watson, Holistic Nursing

INTRODUCTION

In the context of nursing, the application of this breathing technique can be integrated with Jean Watson's Caring Theory, which emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship between nurses and patients in achieving holistic healing. Jean Watson views humans as a unity of body, mind, and spirit that interact with each other, so that the healing process does not only focus on physical aspects but also emotional and spiritual aspects. A caring approach that involves empathy, therapeutic communication, and human touch can create a healing environment that supports the holistic balance of the patient (Breating & Watson, 2023).

Breathing is a vital bodily function that plays an important role in maintaining a person's physiological and psychological balance. Disorders of the respiratory system, such as asthma, can reduce a patient's quality of life due to discomfort, pain, and anxiety (Rasyid & Saputa, 2025). Non-

pharmacological nursing interventions such as breathing exercises have been shown to be effective in increasing lung capacity, reducing anxiety, and speeding up patient recovery (Chen et al., 2017).

Breathing exercises such as Slow Deep Breathing (SDB) and Diaphragmatic Breathing (DB) help calm the body by activating the parasympathetic nervous system. This activation makes the body more relaxed, lowers blood pressure, and reduces both physical and emotional stress. In addition to providing benefits for the body, these exercises also foster self-awareness and strengthen the connection between body, mind, and spirit, in line with the principle of caring that emphasizes holistic balance (Rosdiana et al., 2023). Physiologically, breathing exercises can improve gas exchange in the lungs, stabilize breathing and heart rate, and create a calmer state of mind (Anderson & Huxel Bliven, 2016). Exercises such as the Active Cycle of Breathing Technique (ACBT) have been proven effective in helping patients recover after lung surgery, reducing the risk of respiratory disorders, and improving quality of life when applied with a comprehensive nursing approach (Ji & Yan, 2023).

The Finger Hold Relaxation (FH) technique also plays a role in shifting the patient's focus from pain to emotional relaxation, which ultimately improves sleep quality and accelerates psychological recovery (Zalius & Bahar, 2025).

Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by impaired airflow and ineffective breathing patterns. The main treatment for asthma generally involves pharmacological therapy (Kartikasari et al., 2019). Breathing exercises have also been shown to play an important role as a complementary therapy to improve quality of life and reduce symptoms of shortness of breath. Exercises such as yogic breathing, Buteyko, and DB help patients achieve relaxation and better breath control (Harper & Trayer, 2022).

In conclusion, the integration of breathing techniques into nursing practice, particularly based on Jean Watson's Theory of Caring, offers a significant holistic approach to improving patient well-being. Breathing exercises are not only an intervention to improve physiological function, but also a means of achieving emotional and spiritual balance (Sheikh et al., 2024). Thus, the application of breathing exercises combined with the principles of caring can be an effective strategy in improving the quality of life of patients, especially those suffering from chronic respiratory disorders.

METHOD

The method used for writing this literature review is a method that is systematically arranged in collecting and synthesizing previous studies. The framework used is SPIDER (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research Type). The journals found in this database search were obtained from PubMed, Google Scholar, and with a publication period ranging from 2015 to 2025. In the initial stage of the journal article search, 32 articles were obtained. Based on the screening results, articles were selected based on the year of publication, type of article, full text, and design using the keywords “Breathing Exercises,” “Caring Behavior,” “Jean Watson,” and “Holistic Nursing.” Of these, only about 16 articles were considered relevant. The researchers read the articles and found that several articles were not suitable, resulting in a total of 10 articles, including 5 national and 5 international articles.

RESULTS

The application of Jean Watson SDB's theory can have positive results on patients with high anxiety levels, and can lower blood pressure and create a sense of

calm and a more open relationship between nurses and patients (Breating & Watson, 2023). This study evaluates the application of Slow Deep Breathing (SDB) in patients after herniadectomy using Jean Watson's Theory of Caring approach. The results show an improvement in respiratory function, a reduction in post-operative pain, and an increase in feelings of safety and comfort through emotional support from nurses (Rosdiana et al., 2023). The application of Jean Watson's theory in deep breathing exercises helps nurses understand patients' needs comprehensively (Asnaini et al., 2023).

This study assessed the effectiveness of diaphragmatic breathing (DB) in reducing anxiety. The results showed that DB significantly reduced heart rate and stress response by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, thereby helping to regulate emotions (Chen et al., 2017).

As stated by (Yanti et al., 2022) This study examined the use of Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) in hypertensive patients using Watson's theory. The results showed a decrease in anxiety and an increase in comfort. Caring behavior increased patient trust and openness.

Using a pre-test post-test design, this study shows that PMR in asthma patients can significantly reduce the frequency of asthma recurrence. Relaxation techniques help patients maintain calmness and reduce stress, which triggers asthma attacks (Zanita et al., 2025).

This study used Finger Hold Relaxation (FH) on patients with hypertension and showed a decrease in blood pressure and an increase in emotional calmness. Integration with caring theory strengthened the nurse-patient relationship during the intervention (Fatmawati et al., 2023). This study combined DB and FH techniques in patients with lateral hernia. The results showed a significant reduction in pain intensity, improvement in blood pressure and pulse rate, and an increase in patient quality of life and rest (Zalius & Bahar, 2025).

This international study examined the use of ACBT combined with Watson's Theory in patients who had undergone lung cancer surgery. The results showed improved respiratory rehabilitation, reduced anxiety, and better patient compliance due to the caring approach (Ji & Yan, 2023).

This study shows that various breathing exercises such as yogic breathing and Buteyko are effective in helping asthma patients control their breathing patterns and reduce symptoms. Caring implementation increases patient motivation and engagement (Harper & Trayer, 2022).

This study evaluated home-based breathing exercises in COPD patients. The results showed an improvement in lung capacity, quality of life, and activity tolerance. The caring approach of healthcare workers helped improve patient discipline in performing the exercises (Lu et al., 2020).

Research on COVID-19 patients shows that Guided Breathing Exercises significantly reduce anxiety, stress, and depression. When combined with a caring approach, patients report feeling calm, emotionally supported, and more confident in the spiritual healing process (Sheikh et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

The continuous application of Jean Watson's Caring Model has a positive impact on patients' physical and psychological aspects because this theory is based on human-to-human relationships that emphasize empathy, full presence, and nurses' commitment to accompanying the healing process. The caring approach creates a therapeutic environment that stabilizes patients' emotional conditions, thereby increasing the effectiveness of various

clinical interventions, including breathing exercises.

Physiologically, diaphragmatic breathing (DB) exercises have been shown to improve lung function, increase ventilation efficiency, and strengthen respiratory muscles (Bissett et al., 2019). However, the success of these exercises depends not only on physical mechanisms but also on the patient's psychological readiness. Caring acts as an internal enhancer—feelings of safety, appreciation, and accompaniment make patients more cooperative in practicing this technique consistently.Relaxation techniques such as DB and Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

This lowers the patient's blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate (Breating & Watson, 2023). This physiological response is reinforced by a stable emotional atmosphere, which is created through the therapeutic relationship between nurse and patient. Caring acts as a psychophysiological modulator that strengthens the impact of relaxation techniques. The reduction of stress hormones, decreased anxiety, and increased sense of self-control are important factors that explain why breathing exercises are more effective when performed in a caring context.

Additionally, DB contributes to pain reduction and accelerated recovery (Rosdiana et al., 2023). Caring helps patients make sense of bodily sensations, manage emotional tension, and increase inner calm. Because pain perception is influenced by psychological conditions, caring helps shift the patient's response to pain from reactive to more adaptive.

In cases of decreased lung function that cause shortness of breath, the caring theory emphasizes the integration of physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects in the healing process. The full presence of nurses increases confidence and reduces distress, so that breathing exercises can be performed more optimally (Lu et al., 2020). Caring acts as a protective factor against the psychological impact of respiratory symptoms.

The Finger Hold (FH) technique, which uses an emotional relaxation approach, is more effective when based on an empathetic relationship. Patients find it easier to enter a state of relaxation that supports pain reduction and quality improvement (Fatmawati et al., 2023). Good sleep quality accelerates both physiological and psychological recovery.

In chronic conditions such as asthma, PMR techniques have been shown to reduce the frequency of recurrence (Zanita et al., 2025). Analytically, caring creates a sense of control and long-term hope that reduces chronic stress and the body's inflammatory response, thereby strengthening the preventive effects of PMR. The success of ACBT is also greatly influenced by patient compliance. Caring increases trust, reduces stress, and strengthens motivation, so that patients are more consistent in their airway clearance exercises. Through the Watson approach, nurses not only facilitate physical aspects, but also spiritual and emotional aspects that accelerate healing (Ji & Yan, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS.

Various studies have proven that breathing exercises and relaxation techniques play an effective role in improving the physical and psychological condition of patients. Methods such as DB, SLB, PMR, and FH have been proven to lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and pain levels, and improve an individual's quality of life..

The application of Jean Watson's Caring Theory in nursing interventions reinforces a holistic and empathetic approach to patients. Through this theory, the relationship between nurses and patients becomes more humane and supportive, resulting in a more optimal and comprehensive recovery process.

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