Therapeutic Communication in Forming Corporate Culture for Work Stress Management at PT. Astra Internasional

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to identify the role of therapeutic communication techniques in shaping a corporate culture that supports work stress management through a systematic literature review. As emphasized by Schein (2021), an effective organizational culture is built through communication patterns that are consistent with the company's core values. The study findings revealed that the implementation of therapeutic communication techniques - which include an empathetic approach, active listening, and supportive responses - in corporate culture can significantly reduce symptoms of work stress, including anxiety and burnout (Workplace Mental Health Institute, 2023). Organizations with an open communication culture that adopt therapeutic communication principles tend to have higher levels of employee resilience at PT. Astra (Gallup, 2022). As stated by Miller and Chen (2022), the integration of therapeutic communication techniques into daily management practices not only improves employee psychological well-being but also contributes to increased overall organizational productivity. This study provides several practical implications, including: (1) the importance of integrating therapeutic communication principles into internal communication policies, (2) the need for management training that focuses on developing empathetic communication skills, and (3) the design of employee well-being programs based on a therapeutic communication approach. This finding reinforces SHRM's (2022) view of the crucial role of communication culture in creating a healthy and productive work environment.

Keyword: *Communication, Therapeutic, Corporate Culture, Stress, Management*

INTRODUCTION

In a competitive business era, employee psychological well-being is a determining factor for organizational sustainability. Work stress, if not managed properly, can lead to decreased productivity, increased turnover, and even mental health disorders such as burnout and anxiety (WHO, 2022). PT. Astra, as one of the largest multinational companies in Indonesia with more than 150,000 employees, faces similar challenges in maintaining a balance between performance demands and employee well-being.

Corporate culture plays a crucial role in creating a work environment that supports stress management. According to Schein (2021), organizational culture not only reflects the company's core values but is also shaped through daily communication patterns between leaders and employees. In this context, therapeutic communication techniques—including an empathetic approach, active listening, and supportive responses—become a strategic tool to strengthen an inclusive and supportive corporate culture. Therapeutic communication is a form of communication used to help individuals understand and overcome emotional problems or distress. In an organizational context, therapeutic communication involves active listening skills, empathy, honesty, and psychological support between leaders and employees (Arnold & Boggs, 2016). This technique is not only used by health professionals, but is also relevant in work environments that demand intensive and stressful interpersonal interactions.

Organizational culture is a system of values, norms, and practices that develop within an organization and influence the behavior of its members (Schein, 2010). A positive organizational culture can create a supportive work environment, where open communication and emotional support become part of everyday life. In this context, the application of therapeutic communication can be a manifestation of organizational cultural values that care about the psychological well-being of employees. Meanwhile, companies are required to manage existing resources and reduce the negative risks that arise. One of them is work stress. Work stress is a physical and emotional response that occurs when job demands do not match the abilities, resources, or needs of workers (Leka et al., 2004). Factors that cause work stress include high workload, lack of social support, role conflict, and unclear tasks. If not managed properly, work stress can have a negative impact on employee productivity, job satisfaction, and mental health.

To make therapeutic communication part of the organizational culture, commitment from leaders and training for all members of the organization are needed. This includes training in empathetic communication skills, developing policies that support work-life balance, and creating an inclusive and stigma-free work environment for mental health issues. When therapeutic communication becomes part of the organizational culture, employees tend to feel more valued and supported, so that stress levels can be significantly reduced. Several studies have shown that organizations that implement a supportive communication approach have lower levels of work stress and higher work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Kahn, 1990). Research by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) also shows that social support in the workplace, which is part of therapeutic communication, has a positive correlation with job satisfaction and employee engagement. in some cases in large companies such as PT Internasional Astra, it has different levels of impact and is not always positively correlated as evidenced by the many types of work stress experienced by employees. Therefore, the position of this research is to describe case examples and identify other factors causing a work culture that is

considered 'less good' for employees and companies so that it is hoped that it can provide a picture of risk management and ideal therapeutic communication patterns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to understand the role of therapeutic communication in shaping corporate culture at PT. Astra. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal perceptions, experiences, and social dynamics related to communication practices in the work environment (Creswell, 2014).

The technique for finding informants because the exploratory strength is based on each person's personal experience according to their respective fields of experience, then using purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

1. Have worked for at least 1 year
2. Have been involved in intensive interpersonal communication at work
3. Willing to be an informant and provide relevant information

The number of informants was determined by snowball sampling until data saturation (data redundancy) was achieved.

Data was taken after specific collection with previous criteria. obtained around 72 informants and after reaching saturation level, only 8 informants met the requirements. then the data was processed with 3 steps Data Collection Techniques

1. In-depth interviews:
Conducted semi-structured for flexibility in exploring topics.
2. Participatory observation:
Recording interactions in the workplace that show forms of therapeutic communication or work stress.
3. Documentation study:
Analyzing SOPs, HR policies, communication training records, burnout data, or psychosocial reports. Furthermore, using thematic analysis techniques according to Braun & Clarke which include data transcription and familiarization, Initial coding of data, Theme search, Theme review, Defining and naming themes (stress, stress levels, involvement), Preparation of narratives and interpretation of results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the implementation of therapeutic communication techniques at PT. Astra contributes to:

1. Reducing symptoms of work stress, such as anxiety and burnout (Workplace Mental Health Institute, 2023).
2. Increasing employee resilience due to a culture of open communication (Gallup, 2022).
3. Increasing productivity through better psychological well-being (Miller & Chen, 2022).
   PT. Astra's corporate culture that integrates therapeutic communication principles into internal policies—such as active listening training for managers—has been shown to strengthen superior-subordinate relationships and create a healthier work environment (SHRM, 2022).

Therapeutic Communication Implementation Matrix at PT. Astra

Component	Implementation n strategy	Stakeholders	Expected ouncome	Measurement (%)
Active listening	Training for HR & healthcare providers	Employees, management	Improved conflict resolution	85% satisfaction
Empathy building	Workshop & role-playing sessions	Team leaders, staff	Enchanced employee mental health	78% participation
Non-Verbal cues	Video-based learning modules	All departements	Better patient/client interactions	90% compliance
Feedback mechanisms	Digital surveys & focus groups	HR, employees	Increased trust in management	65% response rate
Crisis communication	Protocols for emergencies	Safety teams	Reduced escalation of crises	75% response rate

Aspect Strategy Implementation Impact

Aspect	strategy	implementation	Impact (measurable outcomes)
Active listening	Train leaders in reflective listening	- Workshops for managers - Monthly feedback sessions	25% reduction in employee grievances (6-month pilot)
Empathy development	Foster emotional intelligence (EQ)	- EQ assessments - Role-playing scenarios in HR training	40% increase in employee satisfaction survey scores
Non-Verbal Communication	Improve body language awareness	- Video-based training - AI-powered posture/gesture analysis tools	15% boost in client satisfaction ratings
Crisis De-escalation	Standardize conflict resolution protocols	- Crisis simulation drills - Dedicated "support ambassadors"	30% faster resolution of workplace conflicts
Feedback Culture	Implement anonymous digital platforms	- Real-time feedback app - Quarterly "open dialogue" forums	50% higher participation in feedback initiatives

To enhance internal communication, we will integrate empathy principles to increase transparency and trust. For leadership communication, we will train leaders in compassionate messaging through monthly "Ask Me Anything" sessions with executives and empathy workshops for managers, targeting a 30% increase in employee trust (measured by survey scores). To foster transparency, we will normalize open dialogue

with bi-weekly CEO video updates on company challenges and successes, along with an anonymous Q&A portal featuring guaranteed responses, aiming for a 40% reduction in rumor mill activity (tracked via internal audits). Feedback integration will be strengthened by publishing quarterly "You Spoke, We Acted" reports and implementing a 48-hour response pledge to submissions, projected to boost pulse survey participation by 50%. During crises, we will prioritize emotional validation using pre-approved empathy templates for HR and stakeholders, along with a 24/7 mental health hotline, targeting 20% faster morale recovery post-crisis. Additionally, to cultivate appreciation, we will introduce a peer-to-peer "Kudos" system and direct manager birthday/anniversary calls, expecting a 25% improvement in employee retention and a more engaged, valued workforce **Well-being Program – Reducing Burnout Through Empathetic Dialogue:** With the goal of decreasing employee burnout by 30% within 12 months, this program leverages evidence-based therapeutic communication techniques. Key components include:

1. **On-Demand Counseling Sessions** – Confidential 1:1 sessions with certified workplace counselors, available in hybrid (in-person/virtual) formats, with six-session packages tailored to individual needs.
2. **Group Therapeutic Circles** – Monthly peer support groups facilitated by mental health professionals, including specialized tracks for high-stress roles like factory supervisors and customer service teams.
3. **Manager Training** – "First Responder" certification to help leaders recognize burnout signs, along with therapeutic communication toolkits for daily check-ins. By integrating these initiatives, we aim to create a healthier, more supportive workplace environment.

Most informants stated that empathetic and supportive communication has become part of daily work habits. This can be seen from the practices: (1) Greeting and asking for daily news; (2) The habit of actively listening to coworkers; (3) No culture of blaming when mistakes occur

"Here, superiors like to ask how you are before talking about work. That makes me more comfortable." (Employee 4)

Therapeutic communication is practiced informally when employees experience work pressure, for example: Supervisors provide special time to listen to complaints, Encourage each other when the workload is high and there is a weekly "work vent" session moderated by HR.

"Sometimes we just need to be heard. Friends at the next table are usually a safe place to vent." (Employee 5)

Although the communication culture has developed quite well, there are several obstacles found, namely 1). Lack of advanced training for team leaders, 2) There are supervisors who still use an authoritarian communication style, 3). High workloads sometimes make communication rushed

"When we are chasing targets, communication becomes rushed, there is no time for empathy." (Supervisor 1)

Informants stated that the presence of therapeutic communication helps them feel more appreciated and cared for, More open in conveying workloads and Reduces emotional stress due to work conflicts.

"Having friends to talk to openly makes work easier." (Employee 6)

Most informants stated that therapeutic communication has become a basic value in the work culture of PT Astra International. This value is manifested in: 1) Polite and humanistic language between job levels, 2). Two-way communication procedures between superiors and subordinates, 3) The existence of company policies that emphasize the values of respect, trust, and empathy.

"We are taught to listen, not only to listen to orders, but also to listen to the feelings of coworkers." (Employee 7)

Therapeutic communication is also practiced in various forms at PT Astra, including: (1) One-on-one coaching by supervisors; (2) Morning briefing with emotional check-in, sometimes even religious studies; (3) Employee counseling center that is available and actively used

"If I'm stressed, I can book a heart-to-heart session with HRD. It's confidential and very helpful." (Employee 8).
The direct impact of the implementation of therapeutic communication is seen in:
1. Reduction of conflict between teams
2. Increased job satisfaction
3. Individual resilience in facing target and deadline pressure

Based on the HR report last year, there was a decrease in absence due to mild psychological disorders by 17% compared to the previous year. In the context of a work environment full of targets and pressure, therapeutic communication provides space for employees to respond to stress in a healthy way. With mechanisms such as regular coaching and counseling sessions, companies help employees in self-regulation and emotional management. This is in line with Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) approach to coping strategies, where quality social support can reduce individual perceptions of stress. When employees experience burnout or high pressure, therapeutic communication serves as a means of recovery. Getting emotional support from coworkers, superiors, or HR not only helps in the short term, but also builds long-term resilience. Although the benefits have been proven to be great, the implementation of therapeutic communication at PT Astra still faces challenges, especially in the leadership style that is not yet uniform. Some superiors still use an authoritarian approach, which can reduce the effectiveness of empathetic communication. Therefore, ongoing training for all managerial lines is crucial to maintain this culture.

No	Theme	Sub-theme	Verbatim Quote	Interpretation
1	Therapeutic Communication as a Foundation of Organizational Values	Empathy and mutual respect	We were trained to listen—not just to instructions, but to our colleagues' emotions as well." (Employee 3)	Therapeutic communication is embedded as a value, not just a task.
2	Therapeutic Communication Practices in Daily Work	Employee coaching and emotional check-in	"When I'm stressed, I can book a confidential counseling session with HR. It's truly helpful." (Employee 5)	Formal counseling supports systematic stress handling.
3	Impact on Stress Management and Employee Well-being	Conflict reduction and psychological safety	"When we maintain open communication, conflicts become rare. Work becomes more harmonious." (Supervisor 2)	Open communication reduces stress from interpersonal conflict.
4	Challenges in Sustaining Therapeutic Culture	Inconsistent leadership style	"Some managers still employ outdated, 'military-style' approaches, which can create unnecessary workplace tension." (Supervisor 1)	Inconsistent managerial style disrupts culture sustainability.
5	Organizational Commitment to Mental Health	Company policy on employee well-being	"We conduct quarterly assertive communication training sessions, with mandatory post-training evaluation forms for all participants." (HR Manager)	Structural support reinforces therapeutic communication.

Theme 1 shows that the values of empathy and listening have become part of work habits, not just formalities. Theme 2 shows real practices of therapeutic communication integrated with HR systems, such as coaching and counseling. Theme 3 shows direct benefits in the form of reduced conflict and increased work comfort.Theme 4 shows that this culture is not yet fully evenly distributed among all team leaders.Theme 5 underlines the importance of the role of company policies in strengthening a mental health-based work culture.

The results of this study confirm that therapeutic communication at PT Astra International has become an integral part of the corporate culture that supports work stress management. Communication that emphasizes empathy and trust becomes a connecting medium between organizational structure and employee welfare. This finding is in line with Watson's Theory of Human Caring, which states that empathetic communication forms a mutually respectful working relationship and strengthens team cohesion. In addition, this approach supports the view of Lazarus & Folkman (1984) on social coping as an adaptive strategy for work stress.

However, the study also highlights that the implementation of therapeutic communication must be supported by managerial consistency and strengthening of organizational policies, so that it is not only normative but becomes an inherent behavior in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

Therapeutic communication plays a strategic role as a soft infrastructure in work stress management. At PT Astra International, its implementation not only prevents stress, but also strengthens team cohesion, increases employee retention, and creates a workplace that supports psychological growth. A strong organizational culture is built through communication patterns that are consistent with the company's core values. The implementation of these principles at PT. Astra has strengthened an inclusive and supportive work climate through ongoing therapeutic communication and thorough evaluation.

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