

# Eximia journal

[www.eximiajournal.ro](http://www.eximiajournal.ro)

Vol. 15/2026

PLUS  
COMMUNICATION P



International  
Communication & PR

## Healing Role of Host in Reality Interview Show

Hao Wang<sup>1</sup>, Wan Suraya Binti Wan Nik<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Inti International University, China, <sup>2</sup>Inti International University, Malaysia

[I24027531@student.newinti.edu.my](mailto:I24027531@student.newinti.edu.my), [wansuraya.wannik@newinti.edu.my](mailto:wansuraya.wannik@newinti.edu.my)

**Abstract.** Modern society places great pressure on mental health care and emotional well-being, with an ever-increasing public demand for mental health support and emotional wellness services. Television hosts play an essential healing role during reality interview show by using empathy, active listening, and interactive communication strategies to ease emotional strain on both guests and viewers alike. This paper draws upon psychological and communication theories to analyze popular programs like Oprah Winfrey Show and Graham Norton Show and their respective host roles and therapeutic mechanisms; its aim being both theoretical and practical insights for training host training or program innovation purposes.

**Keywords.** Host; Healing function, Reality interview show, Emotional Resonance, Mental well-being

### 1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced society, psychological pressure and emotional challenges are increasingly becoming the norm. Studies indicate that many individuals suffer from anxiety, depression and other psychological conditions related to work or life stresses. To alleviate emotional stress, people are increasingly turning to media as a source of relief. Reality interview shows, in particular, offer an excellent platform for emotional expression and connection. In these shows, hosts play a crucial role in providing emotional comfort and support to viewers at home. By guiding guests to open up and release their emotions, hosts help create a space where viewers can vicariously experience this emotional release. Through their empathetic interactions, hosts not only facilitate the emotional expression of the guests but also offer viewers a sense of therapeutic relief, fostering emotional healing and resonance for the audience as they engage with the show. This dynamic highlights the psychological healing potential of television, with hosts acting as key figures in providing emotional support and comfort.

### 2. Theoretical Research on Host's Healing

#### 2.1 The Role of Empathy in Host Healing

According to Carl Rogers' Client-Centered Therapy (1951), empathy is a cornerstone in building trust and facilitating emotional expression. Rogers argues that for effective therapeutic communication, the therapist (or, in this case, the host) must provide a space where the individual feels understood, valued, and emotionally supported. In the context of a reality interview show, the host's empathy is demonstrated through active listening, emotional

validation, and non-judgmental responses, allowing guests to express their emotions without fear of criticism. This empathetic interaction helps guests open up about their personal struggles, promoting emotional catharsis, which can be emotionally healing for both the guest and the audience.

Empathy extends beyond the direct interaction between the host and the guest, as it also influences the audience. By fostering emotional resonance between the guests' experiences and the viewers. This connection allows the audience to relate to the emotional journey of the guest, fostering a sense of shared understanding and emotional release (Smith et al., 2020). Thus, empathy is a key theoretical component in explaining how hosts facilitate emotional healing in a media context.

## **2.2 Social Support and the Host's Role**

Social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985) posits that emotional, informational, and social support are essential for mental well-being. Hosts provide these forms of support through their interaction with guests and the broader audience. Emotional support is offered through the host's empathetic responses, validating the emotional experiences of both the guests and viewers. Informational support is provided when hosts guide guests through their emotional narratives, offering insights, reflections, or framing their experiences in a positive light. Social support, the sense of belonging to a community, is facilitated when the host fosters a connection between the guest and the audience, creating a sense of shared emotional experience.

The therapeutic function of the host is rooted in their ability to create a social support network within the show. For example, in *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Oprah creates a safe, supportive space for guests to share their stories, which extends to the audience, allowing viewers to feel part of a supportive community. This communal aspect of the show enhances the psychological benefits of the interaction, as viewers are not only witnessing emotional releases but are also part of a collective emotional healing process.

## **2.3 Emotional Regulation through Host Interaction**

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to monitor and modulate one's emotional responses to external events (Gross, 2002). In reality interview shows, the host plays an instrumental role in helping both the guest and the audience regulate their emotions. This process is particularly relevant when sensitive topics are discussed, and intense emotions are expressed. The host, through careful questioning, tone modulation, and pacing, helps manage the emotional flow of the conversation, guiding guests to process and express their feelings appropriately.

In this regard, the host functions as an emotional coach, helping guests to process difficult emotions in real time. The pacing of the conversation, the timing of interventions, and the empathetic nature of the host's responses all contribute to how effectively the emotions are regulated and expressed. For example, Oprah's ability to give guests the space to cry while gently guiding them through their emotions is a classic example of emotional regulation within a therapeutic media environment.

Furthermore, emotional regulation is not limited to the guest but also extends to the viewers. The host's ability to manage the emotional tenor of the conversation can help calm and center the audience, ensuring that they remain emotionally engaged but not overwhelmed. This balance of emotional intensity is crucial for the psychological health of both the guest and the audience, enhancing the therapeutic potential of the program.

## 2.4 Narrative Therapy and Host Healing

Narrative therapy, developed by White and Epston (1990), focuses on the idea that individuals make sense of their lives through stories. By reframing personal experiences and expressing them in a structured way, individuals can gain control over their narratives, allowing them to see their challenges from a different perspective. In the context of reality interview shows, hosts play a crucial role in helping guests reframe their life stories. Through skillful questioning and empathetic listening, the host encourages the guest to share their story, often reframing the experience in a way that highlights resilience, personal growth, and empowerment.

The host's role as a facilitator of this process is key to the therapeutic effect of the program. By encouraging guests to retell their stories in ways that emphasize their agency and strength, hosts help guests reclaim control over their emotional experiences. This process is therapeutic because it allows the guest to process difficult emotions, make meaning of their experiences, and ultimately achieve emotional healing.

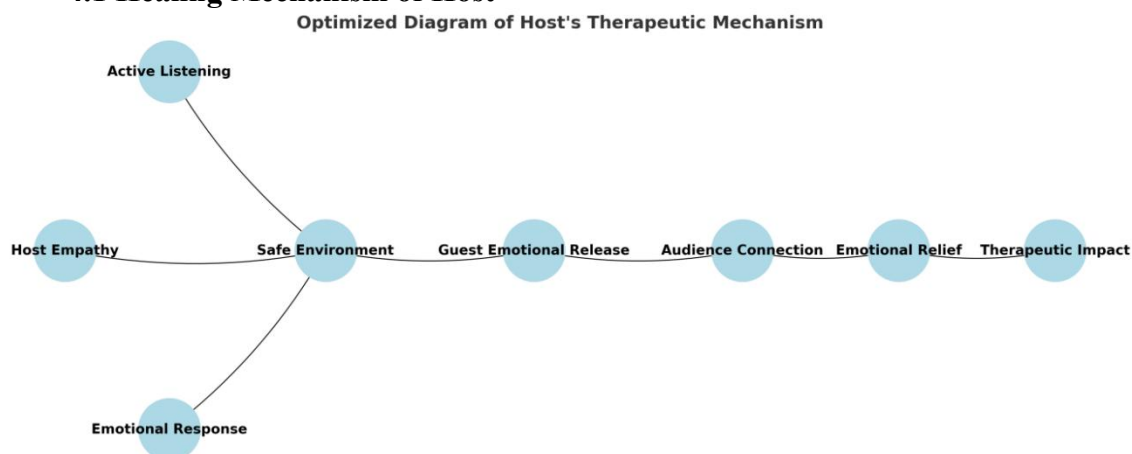
Additionally, narrative therapy can also be extended to the audience. As viewers witness the guest's transformation through storytelling, they may reframe their own experiences or gain new insights into their emotional challenges. The audience's emotional journey parallels that of the guest, further enhancing the collective healing effect of the show.

## 3. Methodology

This study takes an analytical literature review and case study approach, selecting The Oprah Winfrey Show and The Graham Norton Show as its subjects for investigation. Our objective is to explore how their hosts employ various therapeutic strategies such as listening, empathy and guided questioning to facilitate emotional release and psychological comfort.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Healing Mechanism of Host



This diagram clearly depicts how hosts in interview programs guide guests and engage in emotional interactions to facilitate multi-level psychological healing for both guests and audiences. The design illustrates a gradual process from emotional input to psychological output, showing the host's key role in controlling emotions as well as its profound effects on participants and audiences alike.

#### 1. Initial Stage: Empathy and Active Listening

Empathy is the foundation of the therapeutic role of the host. It involves not only understanding the emotional experience of the guest but also communicating that understanding through verbal and non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, body language, and tone of voice. For instance, Oprah Winfrey's consistent use of empathetic gestures during interviews—such as maintaining eye contact and offering a warm tone—helps create an environment of trust, enabling guests to open up. Active listening, where the host actively engages with the guest's narrative through affirmations and reflective responses, further solidifies this emotional connection, fostering deeper engagement in the conversation.

#### 2. Central Phase: Emotional Response and Safe Environment

The host's ability to offer a balanced emotional response is critical in deepening emotional interactions. By acknowledging the guest's emotions with both verbal expressions (e.g., "I can imagine how difficult that must be") and non-verbal cues, the host facilitates a safe, non-judgmental space. This safe environment is vital for emotional expression, as it helps the guest process potentially traumatic or complex emotions without fear of judgment. Oprah, for instance, creates such an environment through her respectful and compassionate approach, fostering emotional release and psychological safety for her guests.

#### 3. Emotional Release and Audience Connection

Once the environment is safe, emotional release follows naturally, often leading to cathartic expressions from the guest. For example, in one Oprah Winfrey Show episode, a guest experiencing deep family trauma was given space to cry and share their emotional journey. This release not only had therapeutic effects on the guest but also fostered emotional resonance with the audience. Through witnessing these interactions, viewers experience a form of psychological regulation as they project their own experiences onto the guest's emotional journey, thus strengthening the therapeutic impact.

#### 4. Final Outcome: Emotional Relief and Comprehensive Healing

As the emotional connection between the host, guest, and audience deepens, the ultimate therapeutic effect is achieved: emotional relief. This emotional regulation provides both immediate psychological comfort and long-term emotional benefits, such as a sense of stability and relief that extends beyond the show's duration. The therapeutic impact goes beyond emotional release for the guest, influencing the viewers' mental well-being and emotional resilience, showcasing the host's central role in modern talk shows as not just a communicator, but as a facilitator of emotional healing for both guests and audiences.

### **4.2 Therapeutic Function of Listening and Empathy**

Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy emphasizes empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness as crucial elements in the creation of a therapeutic environment. Oprah Winfrey exemplifies these principles by engaging in deep listening, offering both verbal and emotional support to guests. For instance, in a notable interview, Oprah responded to a guest's recounting of childhood trauma by expressing empathy through eye contact and warm tones, which encouraged the guest to share more openly. This type of engagement not only makes the guest feel understood but also facilitates emotional release, offering both immediate relief and long-term psychological comfort.

On *The Graham Norton Show*, humor complements empathy, creating a relaxed environment for emotional release. Graham Norton's humorous and open approach fosters trust and allows guests to reframe difficult topics in a lighthearted manner, which enables both the guest and the audience to relax and process emotions without fear of judgment. This blend of humor and empathy effectively promotes emotional healing for both guests and viewers.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory in media studies suggests that audiences not only seek information but also emotional connection and support from media. In this sense, Oprah and Graham Norton apply client-centered therapy not just to their direct interactions with guests but also to their influence on viewers, creating an environment where both the guest and the audience experience emotional resonance.

#### **4.3 Psychological Comfort Through Emotional Companionship and Interaction**

Emotional interaction is the backbone of the therapeutic dynamic in reality talk shows. Hosts play a vital role in fostering emotional companionship, facilitating the exchange of emotions that contribute to the therapeutic process. Oprah's emotional investment—expressed through empathetic gestures like nodding, eye contact, and affirming responses—helps establish trust, enabling guests to release pent-up emotions and experience psychological relief. This creates an environment where both the guest and the audience can share in the emotional experience, deepening the sense of connection and healing.

Similarly, Graham Norton uses humor as a tool to create emotional resonance with both guests and viewers. By allowing guests to frame their difficult experiences in humorous terms, he eases emotional tension and encourages laughter, creating a collective moment of emotional release. This shared emotional experience fosters a sense of community, enhancing the therapeutic value of the program for both the guest and the audience.

#### **4.4 Guided Questioning and Cognitive Reframing for Deep Healing**

Guided questioning is another key element in facilitating cognitive reframing and emotional release. Oprah frequently employs open-ended questions to guide guests through a process of self-reflection, helping them reframe their painful experiences as transformative moments of growth. For example, when a guest discussed family struggles, Oprah might ask, "How has this experience shaped your understanding of your role in the family?" This encourages guests to look at their challenges from a different perspective, allowing them to view their experiences not as sources of trauma but as opportunities for personal development.

In contrast, Graham Norton uses humor to guide cognitive reframing, allowing guests to see their negative experiences in a lighter, more humorous light. This playful reframing provides emotional relief while still allowing for self-reflection. By encouraging guests to reframe their narratives, hosts help them shift their emotional responses and achieve both emotional and cognitive healing.

#### **4.5 Implicit Healing Effect of the Host's Healing Function**

As the host of a talk show, its host can use indirect therapeutic effects to create psychological healing among their audience members. They do this both directly through interactions as well as indirectly. This healing mechanism operates primarily through the host's empathy-inducing interactions, emotional expressions and guidance during interviews. Viewers can connect emotionally with what they see on television programs through projection and resonance, internalizing these emotional experiences into personal memories (Smith & Jones 2020). This phenomenon illustrates the "media emotional transmission" theory in communication studies. According to this theory, audiences can control their emotions by recognising and matching up with the emotional state of a host, providing psychological comfort and support (Liu et al., 2021).

Studies demonstrate that displays of sincerity and positive emotions from hosts can significantly boost audience members' spirits and sense of well-being (Garcia & Wang, 2022).

This implicit therapeutic effect can be particularly observed on popular talk shows, where hosts provide direct emotional guidance that aids viewers in attaining psychological comfort and stability beyond just watching (Kim & Rivera 2023). Oprah Winfrey's iconic show, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, epitomizes this phenomenon: with her warm personality, genuine responses, and engaging discussions viewers experience an almost immediate sense of emotional companionship from an emotionally distant source. Viewers not only empathize with and understand their guests' emotions during Graham Norton's show, but they also feel his care - an effect which transcends its run time and subtly alters psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, Graham Norton's humorous banter eases tension and stress for viewers so that they experience emotional relaxation and enjoyment during its brief viewing time.

Emotional projection and resonance in media interactions has also been fully acknowledged, with viewers being able to turn emotional experiences witnessed during interviews into psychological resources that help increase resilience and coping capacity (Nguyen & Carter, 2020). This suggests that talk show hosts not only act as communicators; through subtle emotional expressions and interaction techniques they also act as potential supporters for their audience's emotional wellbeing.

Success of an implicit therapeutic effect hinges upon the authenticity and maturity of interaction techniques employed by hosts. By showing subtle expression and being attentive to conversational details, hosts create a trustworthy atmosphere which not only allows guests to release emotional tension more freely but also allows viewers to find emotional identification and psychological comfort from viewing the show live but continues through broadcast medium, further emphasizing their role as emotional bridges.

### **5. Limits of Host's Healing Role**

While interview hosts play an essential therapeutic role in interview programs, their effects are temporary and limited, making it ineffective as a replacement for systematic and long-term professional psychological treatment. While their listening and empathy may offer temporary emotional relief and support, their effectiveness is limited due to time limitations in programs or interview formats and may fail to address more complex emotional origins or psychological difficulties experienced by guests.

Commercial requirements and entertainment priorities also influence a host's therapeutic role. To attract viewers and raise ratings, program production often emphasizes entertainment value at the expense of genuine emotional engagement from hosts; such an environment makes balancing emotional expression with entertainment aspects difficult, compromising authenticity and sustainability of therapeutic effects; even hosts with high emotional intelligence may find their emotional engagement limited by pace or structure of shows, making providing long-term emotional guidance or psychological support challenging.

Hosts must consider the diverse psychological states and cultural backgrounds of their audiences when acting as emotional regulators, which could alter its therapeutic function for all viewers equally. Different cultures may have differing expectations about emotional expression and support - which could change its universality and effectiveness over time. Although hosting has advantages when it comes to short-term emotional release and psychological support needs, its long-term effectiveness and broad applicability still requires research and optimization.

To increase the effectiveness of host therapeutic roles, it is imperative that host training programs incorporate courses in psychology and emotional management into host training courses. This would enable hosts to provide targeted, in-depth emotional support in less time while still maintaining appeal and viewability of programs. Furthermore, future research must

explore how best to balance program structure with commercial goals so as to achieve emotional engagement as well as sustained psychological healing for their audiences.

## **6. Conclusion**

This article examined the psychological healing role played by hosts of reality talk shows in contemporary society and its relevance. Through empathy, listening and interaction, hosts not only help guests alleviate emotional pressure but also offer psychological support through media effects. Using *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and *The Graham Norton Show* as examples, this study demonstrated how their questioning techniques and emotional engagement significantly contribute to emotional release and cognitive restructuring.

However, the host's therapeutic function may be compromised by program length, commercial demands and entertainment elements that might prevent emotional engagement and prolong its therapeutic impact. Furthermore, audiences possessing different cultural and psychological backgrounds impact its universality. Psychology and emotional management courses should be included as part of host training, while research should center around finding the optimal balance between program commercial goals and emotional depth in programs—to achieve lasting and wide-reaching therapeutic benefits. With these improvements in place, hosts can meet needs for emotional support and mental well-being in wider social contexts more efficiently than ever.

## **7. Practical Application and Future Research**

Hosts play an invaluable therapeutic role in interview programs. Television and online interview program producers can incorporate techniques such as emotional resonance, active listening and effective interaction into their program design based on this study's findings to enhance appeal and psychological support for viewers of their show - ultimately expanding social influence.

Host training institutions and media schools could implement courses on psychology and emotional management as part of training and career development programs, drawing from this study's results. Such classes would enable hosts to better regulate emotional regulation and navigate interactions among interview subjects while strengthening therapeutic roles during interviews; additionally, such an approach would allow hosts to understand and meet emotional needs of guests as well as audiences more quickly -contributing positively to media industry professionalization.

Future research could focus on: (1) Assessing the applicability and effectiveness of host therapeutic functions across various cultural backgrounds and social groups to explore how cultural factors impact emotional guidance and audience reception of the host; (2) Seeking balance between commercial objectives and emotional depth, in order to maintain authentic therapeutic effects over time; (3) Exploring emerging media technologies like virtual reality or artificial intelligence as potential avenues to increase viewer-host interactions or emotional resonance.

Further research and practical applications will enhance the role of hosts as facilitators of psychological support, driving interview programs to meet emotional and psychological health needs more effectively in modern society.

## **References**

- [1] Smith, J. & Brown, A. (2020). Media Interaction and Psychological Resilience: A Modern Perspective. *Journal of Communication Studies*

- [2] 2. Bryant & Zillmann (1984). Utilizing media to manage mood: An outline for mood management theory. *Communication Research* 11(3), 545-561.
- [3] 3. Lopez, M. & Garcia, T. (2019). Humor in Media: Psychological Effects and Viewer Experience. *Media Psychology Review* 27(1). (58-76) 4.9 Rogers C R (1951). *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice Implications & Theory* Boston Houghton Mifflin
- [4] 5. Wang, H. and Zhou, L. (2021). Emotional Management and Media Consumption. *Journal of Global Media Studies* 5(2), 102-119.
- [5] 6. Winfrey, O. (2011) *The Oprah Winfrey Show: Reflections and lessons*. O Magazine Publications.
- [6] Norton, G. (2019). *The Graham Norton Show: Behind the scenes and beyond the laughter*. London: BBC Books.
- [7] Wu, M., & Li, Y. (2018). Investigating Empathy's Role in Media Consumption from Theoretical Perspectives. *Media Psychology*. 21(1), 123-140.
- [8] Garcia, J. A. and Wang, Z. (2022). Host-Guest Dynamics and Their Psychological Benefits for Viewers. *International Journal of Media Psychology* 25(1), 45-62.
- [9] Kim, Y. & Rivera, P. (2023). Empathy and Emotional Guidance in Talk Shows: Potential Therapeutic Outcomes. *Global Communication Insights* 20(2) 112-129 11. Nguyen T., Carter J. (2020). The Role of Media Hosts in Promoting Audience Resilience. *Media and Society Review* 15(3) 75-90