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## The Effect of Touch and Talk Therapy on Reducing Anxiety in Hospitality Children



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### Abstract

Hospitalization causes impacts on children such as the impact of separation, loss of control, and illness or pain. Children feel hopeless, protest, uncooperative, and depressed. Children who are sick and have to be hospitalized will have a difficult time because they cannot carry out their habits. The environment and unfamiliar people, care, and various procedures that children undergo are the main sources of stress, disappointment, and anxiety. If not treated immediately, the impact of hospitalization will affect psychosocial development, especially in children. The research aimed to determine the effect of touch and talk therapy on reducing anxiety in hospitalized children in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital, Mojokerto Regency. The design used Pre-Experimental with one Group Pre-Post Test approach. The population in this study were all children who were hospitalized in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, obtaining a sample of 27 respondents. Data analysis used the Wilcoxon signed Ranks test. The instrument used the modified DASS-14 anxiety questionnaire. Touch and talk therapy influences the anxiety level of hospitalized children in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital, Mojokerto. Touch and talk therapy involves touching the child while providing motivation or telling stories to create a relaxed and comfortable condition. Children feel happy and there is a diversion of attention which makes them happy, thereby reducing anxiety in children undergoing hospitalization.

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## INTRODUCTION

Playing is an instinctive nature of a child. When children have entered an active age, the most exciting activity for them is playing. Playing is happiness for children because they can express various feelings. However, when children are sick and hospitalized, playing activities are often abandoned. According to (Nurlaila, Utami, and Cahyani, 2018), hospitalization causes impacts on children such as the impact of separation, loss of control, and illness/pain some of the impacts of hospitalization are children feeling hopeless, causing protest reactions, uncooperativeness, and depression. Children who are sick and have to be hospitalized will have a difficult time because they cannot carry out their habits. The environment and unfamiliar people, care, and various procedures that children undergo are the main sources of stress, disappointment, and anxiety. In general, children's reactions to hospitalization are sadness, fear, and guilt because they are facing something they have never experienced before. Feelings of insecurity, discomfort, a feeling of missing something that is usually experienced and something painful. If not treated immediately, the impact of hospitalization will affect psychosocial development, especially in children. (Supartini, 2012).

Research results (Nurlaila, Noviyanti, and Iswati. Ning, 2021) at the PKU Muhammadiyah Gombong Hospital found that 5.9% of 34 hospitalized children experienced mild anxiety, 14.7% moderate anxiety, and 79.4% severe anxiety. Research (Harsismanto, Yanti, and Alfathona, 2019) in the Edelweys children's ward at RSUD Dr. M. Yunus Bengkulu stated that of the 32 children who were hospitalized on day 1, the majority of children experienced severe anxiety, namely 93.8% and moderate anxiety 6.2%. The results of a preliminary study on December 4 2022 by observing anxiety in hospitalized children in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital showed that almost all of the children experienced anxiety, characterized by frequent crying, fear of health workers, and whining to go home.

Children who experience stress will experience an increase in cortisol, which will inhibit the formation of antibodies, and reduce white blood cells and the body's immunity. This suppression of the immune system seems to result in inhibition of the healing process so it requires quite a long treatment time and will even accelerate the occurrence of complications during treatment (Hale and Tjahjono,

2015). Children in the preschool period (3-6 years) react to hospitalization by refusing to eat, often asking questions, crying slowly, and not being cooperative with health workers. Hospitalization is often perceived by children as punishment, so there are feelings of shame, and fear, which can lead to aggressive reactions, anger, rebellion, and unwillingness to cooperate with nurses (Wong *et al.*, 2019). Anxiety in children will disrupt the child's healing process, making it difficult for children to cooperate with all actions taken during treatment in the ward.

(Wong *et al.*, 2019) revealed that several ways can be done to reduce anxiety in children when undergoing hospitalization, one of which is through language (telling stories). Research conducted by (Pratiwi, 2016) states that anxiety in preschool children can be reduced through touch and talk therapy. The results of the research were obtained in the experimental group from a pre-test score of 12.00 while the post-test score was 9.27 so there was a difference in anxiety levels between before and after touch and talk therapy. In this study, touch and talk therapy, apart from providing touch and support, also told stories.

Touch and talk therapy is carried out by providing touch along with providing motivation or telling stories to the child. where children feel more comfortable when touched. Touch and motivation or telling stories create a relaxed and comfortable condition for children. The child feels happy and there is a diversion of attention which makes him happy so that he can reduce anxiety in the child.

## METHODS

The design used in this research was Pre-Experimental with One Group Pre-Post Test approach. The characteristic of this type of research is that it reveals cause-and-effect relationships by involving a group of subjects. The subject group is observed before the intervention is carried out and then observed again after the intervention (Nursalam, 2016). In this study, subjects were given touch and talk therapy intervention, and then their anxiety levels were assessed before and after the action was carried out. The population in this study were all children who were hospitalized in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the inclusion criteria of children being hospitalized on day one and

obtaining consent from the parents. The sample in this study was some of the children cared for in the children's care room who met the inclusion criteria, as many as 21 children. Researchers used the DASS-14

anxiety questionnaire instrument which had been modified to measure the level of anxiety in children (Nursalam, 2015). The analysis uses the Wilcoxon signed Ranks test.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of respondents based on age, gender and history of, hospitalization**

Characteristics	Category	Frekuensi	(%)
Age	2 - < 7 years	19	70,4
	7 – 12 years	8	29,6
Gender	Man	8	29,6
	Woman	19	70,4
Hospitalization history	Never	20	74,1
	1 time	5	18,5
	2 times or more	2	7,4

Based on table 1, it shows that the majority of respondents were aged 2-<7 years, as many as 19 children (70.4%). Most of the respondents were female, as many as 19 children (70.4%). Most of the respondents had no history of hospitalization, as many as 20 children (74.1%).

**Table 2: Observation results of children's anxiety levels before and after being given touch and talk therapy in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Hospital, Mojokerto**

Anxiety level	Before		After	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Normal	0	0	6	22,2
Light	6	22,2	13	48,1
currently	12	44,4	4	14,8
Heavy	7	25,9	4	14,8
Very heavy	2	7,4	0	0
Total	27	100	27	100
Wilcoxon Signed Test Asimp. sig. (2-tailed)			P: 0.000	

Based on the results of observations of anxiety levels before being given touch and talk therapy, almost half of them had moderate levels of anxiety, as many as 12 children (44.4%). Almost half of the anxiety levels after being given touch and talk therapy had mild levels of anxiety, as many as 13 children (48.1%). The Wilcoxon Signed Test results show Asimp. sig. (2-tailed): 0.000 with a significant value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), meaning that there is an influence of touch and talk therapy on the anxiety level of hospitalized children in the Children's Care Room at RA Basoeni Hospital, Mojokerto.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations of children's anxiety levels before being given touch and talk therapy, almost half of the children had moderate levels of anxiety, namely 12 children (44.4%). Anxiety is often said to be an unpleasant emotional feeling, characterized by terms such as worry, concern, and fear which we sometimes experience to varying degrees (Lestari, 2020). Hospitalization can cause discomfort due to various actions or treatments that make children feel afraid. The child becomes uncooperative with health workers, the response that appears when approached is crying, refusing, and getting angry. Several factors influence anxiety in

children, namely age, gender, and length of stay in the hospital.

The research results showed that respondents who experienced severe and very severe anxiety mostly occurred in children aged 2 years to < 7 years. Respondents aged 7 years – 12 years mostly experienced mild anxiety. According to (Fazrin, 2017) age is often associated with children's growth and development achievements. Children aged 3-6 years are not yet able to accept and perceive illness and experiences in a new environment. The younger the child, the higher the level of anxiety about hospitalization in children, so preschool-age children experience more anxiety due to separation from their family because they child's ability is not yet able to

understand the meaning of hospitalization. Researchers believe that every child has different stressors. The family's parenting style and previous experience of being hospitalized will influence the child's anxiety level. As children get older, they will have more experience and their ability to control their emotions will also get better, so that the level of anxiety they feel will also decrease.

Based on table 1, it shows that the majority of respondents did not have a history of hospitalization, namely 20 children (74.1%). Based on the research results, respondents who did not have a history of hospitalization mostly experienced moderate, severe, and very severe anxiety. The hospital is a new environment for children. The hospital environment is different from conditions at home, and treatment procedures are certainly scary for children. Being sick and having to be hospitalized for a child is something that makes you anxious and stressed.

Based on the results of observations of anxiety levels after being given touch and talk therapy, almost half of them had mild levels of anxiety, namely 13 children (48.1%). Touch means touching, while talk means talking. Touch therapy is carried out by providing touch to provide a feeling of comfort to the child. Talk by providing motivation or telling stories to children so that children are more enthusiastic and divert attention. Touch and talk therapy is providing touch to children at the same time as providing motivation or telling stories so that there is a distraction and a sense of relaxation which makes the child happy and anxious.

The Wilcoxon Signed Test results show Asimp. sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 with a significant value ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), meaning that there is an effect of touch and talk therapy on reducing anxiety in hospitalized children in the treatment room 1 RA Basoeni Regional Hospital, Mojokerto Regency. The results of this research are supported by research (Harsismanto, Yanti, and Alfathona, 2019) regarding the effectiveness of touch and talk therapy and storytelling therapy on anxiety in children aged 3-6 years in the Edelweys room at RSUD Dr. M. Yunus Bengkulu. The results of the research found that touch and talk therapy was more significant in reducing anxiety in children aged 3-6 years compared to storytelling therapy. Research (Pratiwi, 2016) at RSUD Dr. Moewardi Surakarta regarding the effect of touch and talk therapy on the anxiety of preschool children who experienced invasive procedures with a sample of 15 preschool children as the experimental

group, namely the group given touch and talk therapy and 15 preschool children as the control group. Data analysis was carried out using the independent sample t-test. The results of the study showed that the results of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no difference in the average pre-test anxiety of preschool children between the experimental group and the control group ( $p\text{-value}=0.449$ ) and there was a difference in the average post-test anxiety of preschool children between an experimental group with a control group ( $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). Anxiety is often said to be an unpleasant emotional feeling, characterized by worry, concern, and fear that we sometimes experience to varying degrees (Lestari, 2020). Anxiety can be actual if a person is unable to find a solution to his feelings, especially if he has repressed his feelings of anger or frustration for a very long time (Nugraha, 2020).

When sick and being treated in a hospital, children experience various very unpleasant feelings, while the child cannot express them verbally, which causes the anxiety to get worse. When carrying out touch therapy, namely giving a touch to provide comfort to the child, and talking, namely providing motivation or telling stories to the child, can make the child more enthusiastic and divert attention. Touch and talk by giving the child a touch is carried out simultaneously with talking to provide motivation or tell stories. Touch creates a relaxed and comfortable condition, combined with pleasant talk, there is a diversion of attention that makes you happy, thereby reducing anxiety in children undergoing hospitalization.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that there is an influence of touch and talk therapy on reducing the anxiety of hospitalized children in the children's care room at RA Basoeni Regional Hospital, Mojokerto Regency. Touch and talk therapy by giving children touch is carried out simultaneously with providing motivation or telling stories to create a relaxed and comfortable condition. Children feel happy and there is a diversion of attention which makes them happy, thereby reducing anxiety in children undergoing hospitalization.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the results of research that has been carried out, several suggestions can be given, namely: it is hoped that nurses as providers of nursing care can

minimize the impact of hospitalization by providing touch and talk therapy. Future researchers are expected to use a control group and an experimental

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#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares there is no conflict of interest in this research, funding, and publication.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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- The main author conducted a survey and analysis of literature based on the phenomena that occurred. Next, the main author designed the research design, collected data, analyzed the data, and compiled the article. The second author assisted with data collection and assisted with data processing. Author 3 coordinated and collected data. All authors provided input and approved the final manuscript to be published.
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