



## AUTOGENIC RELAXATION THERAPY AGAINST ANXIETY LEVELS OF PARENTS OF HOSPITALIZED CHILDREN DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRAK

Perasaan cemas dapat dialami oleh orang tua yang anaknya dirawat di rumah sakit. Pandemi Covid-19 memberikan dampak yang signifikan terhadap semua sektor, termasuk sektor kesehatan, terutama bagi orang tua pasien yang anaknya dirawat di rumah sakit. Ketakutan tertular Covid-19 memperburuk kesehatan anak dengan anak dirawat di rumah sakit dan menjadi faktor penting munculnya kecemasan pada orang tua. Kondisi ini dapat mengganggu proses penyembuhan anak dan mengganggu kesehatan mental orang tua. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh terapi relaksasi autogenik terhadap tingkat kecemasan orang tua anak yang dirawat di rumah sakit pada masa pandemi COVID-19 di RS Budi Setia Langowan. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif dengan jenis *Pre-Experiment* tanpa kelompok kontrol (*One group pretest-posttest design*). Responden dalam penelitian adalah orang tua dari anak yang dirawat sebanyak 16 responden. Teknik pengambilan sampelnya adalah *simple random sampling*. Instrumen dalam penelitian ini adalah kuesioner Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS). Uji statistik yang digunakan adalah uji *Wilcoxon sign rank test* dengan nilai signifikansi  $p < 0,005$ . Hasil yang diperoleh adalah terapi relaksasi autogenik berpengaruh terhadap tingkat kecemasan orang tua yang anaknya dirawat di rumah sakit, dengan *mean rank* pada saat *pre-test* sebesar 8,50 dan menurun menjadi 0,00 pada saat *post-test*. Terdapat pengaruh terapi relaksasi autogenik terhadap tingkat kecemasan orang tua anak yang dirawat di Rumah Sakit. Terapi ini dapat menjadi intervensi mandiri bagi perawat yang bertugas di ruang perawatan anak.

**KATA KUNCI:** Kecemasan, Hospitalisasi, Terapi Relaksasi Autogenik

### ABSTRACT

Feelings of anxiety can experience by parents of hospitalized children. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted all sectors, including the health sector, especially for parents of patients with hospitalized children. The fear of being infected with Covid-19 worsens the health of children with hospitalized children and is an essential factor in the emergence of anxiety in parents. This condition can harm the child's healing process and interfere with the parent's mental health. This study aims to determine the effect of autogenic relaxation therapy on the anxiety level of parents of children hospitalized during the COVID-19 pandemic at Budi Setia Langowan Hospital. This research is quantitative research with *Pre-Experiment* without a control group (*One group pretest-posttest design*). Respondents in the study were parents of children who treated as many as 16 respondents. The sampling technique is simple random sampling. The instrument in this study was the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) questionnaire. The statistical test used was the Wilcoxon signed rank test with a significance value of  $p < 0.005$ . The results obtained are that autogenic relaxation therapy affects the anxiety level of parents whose children are hospitalized, with the mean rank at the pretest being 8.50 and decreasing to 0.00 at the posttest. There is an effect of autogenic relaxation therapy on the anxiety level of parents of hospitalized children. This therapy can be an independent intervention for nurses on duty in the childcare room

**KEYWORDS:** Anxiety, Hospitalization, Autogenic Relaxation Therapy



## INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in various aspects of life at the individual, family, group and community organization level (Earnshaw, 2020). Everyone is worried about being exposed to Covid-19 so various efforts are made to avoid exposure to the virus. People not only comply with wearing masks as advised by the government, but even avoid places where they are considered to have a lot of exposure to Covid-19, such as hospitals. Meanwhile, during the Covid-19 pandemic there were many child patients whose condition had to be treated in hospital. Children are at high risk of suffering from Covid-19, so children are categorized as a vulnerable group (Mazrieva, 2021).

A crisis condition where a child is hospitalized is also called hospitalisation. Hospitalization is a process where for certain reasons, either emergency or planned, the child must stay in hospital undergoing therapy and treatment until being returned home (Supartini, 2012). Hospitalization is called a crisis condition because children are required to adapt to new things in the midst of illness. Based on the 2010 National Economic Survey (SUSENAS), the number of preschool-aged children in Indonesia is 72% of the total population of Indonesia, and it is estimated that 35% of children are undergoing hospitalization and 45% of them experience anxiety. Anxiety responses that children often experience include crying and being afraid of people they have just met (Khairani & Olivia, 2018).

The hospitalization crisis does not only occur in children as patients but is also experienced by parents whose children are being treated in hospital. The anxiety response is the most common feeling experienced by parents. Children who have to be hospitalized during the Covid-19 pandemic, children who have to undergo invasive procedures, as well as diagnoses of illnesses suffered by children, are factors that trigger feelings of anxiety in parents (Khairani & Olivia, 2018). Anxiety is a person's emotions that are related to circumstances outside themselves and the self-mechanisms used to overcome problems (Asmadi, 2015). The anxiety felt by parents can be seen from how we measure the psychological status of parents of children who were cared for during the pandemic and

compare it with parents whose children were cared for before the COVID-19 pandemic in Nangchang. The anxiety scores of parents of children who were cared for during the pandemic were significantly higher than the anxiety scores of parents of children who were cared for before the pandemic (Rong Yuan, Qian-hui Xu, Cui-cui Xia, Chun-yan Lou & Qian-min Ge, 2020). If anxiety continues and is excessive, it can interfere with daily life activities (Mental Health Foundation, 2014).

Anxiety can be overcome in various ways, one of which is non-pharmacological therapy in the form of relaxation techniques. The relaxation process can lengthen the muscle fibers, send impulses to the brain and reduce activity in the brain and other body systems. A decrease in heart and respiratory frequency, blood pressure, oxygen consumption as well as increased brain activity and peripheral (surface) skin temperature are some of the responses to relaxation. Relaxation therapy can help individuals develop cognitive skills to reduce negative energy and respond according to the surrounding environment (Potter & Perry, 2010).

Relaxation exercises are useful for reducing anxiety. Autogenic relaxation technique is a relaxation technique that originates from oneself in the form of words or short sentences or thoughts that can make the mind peaceful. Autogenic relaxation is carried out by imagining oneself in a peaceful and calm state, focusing on regulating breathing and heart rate thereby reducing physiological tension (Umam et al., 2020). Autogenic Relaxation will help the body convey commands through autosuggestion to relax so that it can control breathing, blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature. Based on research, it was found that 10 minutes of relaxation training had a positive effect on general feelings. This can be observed from a decrease in feelings of confusion and weakness scores after post-intervention (Hairul Anuar Hashim, 2011).

One hospital in Langowan found that 11 out of 14 parents of patients experienced anxiety based on initial studies. The anxiety of parents whose children were hospitalized during the Covid-19 pandemic was visible when the patient's parents asked about the conditions in the hospital around the treatment room as well as the Covid-19 patients being treated. The



patient's parents are worried that their child will be infected or exposed to Covid-19. The role of nurses in providing support to parents when children are hospitalized is very important. Nurses as health workers who interact most often with children and families play a role in minimizing anxiety as a result of hospitalization that occurs in parents and forming positive coping. Autogenic relaxation therapy was chosen because it has advantages such as being easy to do, does not require models or media, and does not even cost money. This technique can be applied to hospital care situations. Therefore, researchers conducted research on the effect of autogenic relaxation therapy on parents' anxiety levels in children who were hospitalized during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The type of this research is quantitative research, with a pre-experiment without a control group (One group pretest-posttest design). This research was conducted by giving a pretest (initial observation) before being given an intervention, after that an intervention in the form of autogenic relaxation was given, then a posttest (final observation). Both pretest, intervention, and posttest were given to the same group. This research was conducted in February to August 2022.

The population in this study were parents of pediatric patients who were hospitalized in Budi Setia Langowan Hospital, which in the last 2 months has reached 30 people. The sampling technique used is simple random sampling. Researchers used Federer's formula, namely  $(n-1) \times (t-1) \geq 15$ , to determine the sample size. There were 16 respondents involved. Inclusion criteria were parents of children who had been hospitalized for 2 days.

The procedure for implementing autogenic relaxation therapy begins by asking respondents to choose one sentence that can calm them, such as "Thank God." This sentence becomes a "mantra" during the therapy. Next, position the respondent as comfortably as possible, either sitting or lying down, and encourage them to close their eyes. Respondents were directed to relax their limbs and practice deep breathing techniques. During the deep breathing technique, respondents were asked to focus their minds

on the mantra sentence. The above is done in 10 minutes.

The instrument used in this study was a demographic data questionnaire which included age, gender, education level, and occupation. The researcher also used the HARS (Halminton Branch Scale for Anxiety) questionnaire containing 14 questions. This questionnaire was used to assess the level of parental anxiety before and after the intervention.

Respondents were given a pretest, then the intervention was given according to the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP), when the parents allowed to leave the child for 10-15 minutes. On the next day, respondents were asked to do autogenic relaxation therapy, before being given a posttest.

Analysis of the data used is the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, after previously it was found that the data were not normally distributed using the Saphiro Wilk test.

### RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (n=16)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-28	5	31,25
29-39	8	50
40-50	3	18,75
Gender		
Male	2	12,5
Female	14	87,5
Education Level		
Elementary	3	18,75
Junior High School	5	31,25
Senior High School	7	43,75
Other	1	6,25
Occupation		
Housewife	13	81,25
Farmer	1	6,25
Self-employed	2	12,5
Total	16	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

Based on the characteristics of respondents at Budi Setia Langowan Hospital, it shows that the most respondents are aged 29-39 years as many as 8 respondents (50%), with female sex, namely 14 respondents (87.5%). The highest level of education is SMA 7 respondents (43.75%), and the most



occupation is housewife 13 respondents (81.25%).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Parental Anxiety Levels Before and After Interventions of Hospitalized Children

Anxiety	Pretest		Posttest	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mild Anxiety	0	0	15	93.75
Moderate Anxiety	2	12.5	1	6.25
Severe Anxiety	13	81.25	0	0
Panic	1	6.25	0	0
Total	16	100	16	100

Source: Primary Data 2022

Based on the table above, the level of anxiety of parents before the intervention was mostly in severe anxiety with the number of respondents 13 (81.25%), moderate anxiety 2 respondents (12.5) and panic 1 respondent (6.25%). After being given the intervention, the anxiety of the patient's parents mostly decreased with mild anxiety 15 respondents (93.75%) and moderate anxiety by 1 respondent (6.25%).

Table 3. The Effect (Pre and Post Test) of Autogenic Relaxation Therapy on Parental Anxiety Levels in Hospitalized Children

The Effect of Autogenic Relaxation Therapy on Anxiety Levels in Parents	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Ranks</i>	<i>Sum of Ranks</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>Pretest</i>	16	8.50	136.00	0.000
<i>Posttest</i>	16	0.00	0.00	

Source: Primary Data 2022

Based on table 3, the effect of autogenic relaxation therapy on the anxiety level of parents in children who are hospitalized at the Budi Setia Langowan Hospital, obtained a *p* value of 0.05, then *H<sub>a</sub>* is accepted and *H<sub>0</sub>* is rejected, which means that there is a significant difference effect when administering autogenic relaxation therapy on people's anxiety levels. Parents in children hospitalized at Budi Setia Langowan Hospital. Based on the table, the mean rank dropped from 8.50 to 0.000.

## DISCUSSION

The level of parental anxiety before the intervention was given the most was severe

anxiety. Respondents looked anxious because of several things, such as worrying about children who will have intravenous access and blood collection. Most respondents said that their children were afraid when they saw nurses wearing white uniforms, wearing masks, and especially when carrying something in their hands. The environment and atmosphere of the hospital made the children not want to be in the hospital.

Anxiety experienced by a person is closely related to a sense of uncertainty or helplessness, feeling excessively afraid and anxious about threats (Rosyanti et al., 2017). This unpleasant condition occurs in parents whose children have been hospitalized. Parents will be worried about the sick condition experienced by their child, also anxious when their child will be carried out with painful procedures such as installing intravenous access, taking blood samples, and other actions. Caring for sick family members is a tough task that affects the social, emotional, behavioral, and financial conditions for the family. This condition causes families to be vulnerable to mental stress including anxiety (Rosyanti, Lilin; Hadi, 2021).

The results of this study are in line with research conducted by Triardo (2013). The research is a qualitative type by conducting in-depth interviews with 7 parents whose children are being treated in the Orchid Room of the Salatiga City Hospital. The results of his research show that there are three important themes obtained from the experience of parental anxiety, namely thinking about bad things that will happen, hoping the doctor will come soon, and the burden of hospital costs.

Another study that is in line with the results of this study is the presence of mild, moderate, or severe anxiety experienced by parents when accompanying their children in hospital treatment. A total of 54 parents were involved in this study, and it turns out that most of the respondents experienced moderate levels of anxiety (61.1%) (Simamora, 2020).

Autogenic relaxation therapy is a self-centered therapy that can be done by diverting thoughts or emotions to bring out positive energy, where the person can think about things that can make him calm and relaxed, thereby





reducing anxiety, even in circumstances or situations that are not good (Sutriningsih, 2018).

Autogenic relaxation therapy is able to improve blood circulation and stimulate the release of endorphins that function to regulate anxiety and as a sedative. Autosuggestion in this therapy will control breathing, blood pressure, and even body temperature (Liliana, 2019).

After the intervention was given, the anxiety experienced by the respondents decreased. This could be because respondents who previously did not know about this therapy, were finally able to know and carry out autogenic relaxation therapy. Respondents did this therapy properly and correctly, even according to the respondent's narrative, he often practiced this autogenic relaxation therapy because it helped him calm his mind for a moment in the midst of the existing situation.

Research conducted by (Lutfi Rosida, Imardiani, 2019) found that autogenic relaxation therapy given to respondents was able to reduce anxiety levels. This is also in line with the results of research from Tahir, Rusna; Sartiya Rini, Dewi; Muhsinah, Sitti; Iqra S (2020), where autogenic relaxation therapy given to 60 respondents was able to affect the anxiety of the family of patients undergoing hospital treatment.

This research is based on the concept of the Beuty Neuman theory, namely the Health Care System where this theory discusses stressors that can arise from various sources that can interfere with individuals or groups based on the sources of stressors that arise (Alligood, 2014). In this research concept, the stresser on parents appears when their child is hospitalized. The anxiety that arises can be overcome by giving autogenic relaxation therapy.

Autogenic relaxation therapy is important to implement for parents whose children are hospitalized. Parents of children who are being treated can feel anxious about the child's condition, tense if the child will be given invasive treatment, until ultimately this condition causes the parents to not be optimal in accompanying, providing support, and

caring for the sick child. Autogenic relaxation therapy can reduce parents' anxiety levels, because this therapy can create a calm and relaxing effect on muscles, and can even control breathing, blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that autogenic relaxation therapy has an influence on the anxiety of parents whose children are being treated in hospital. This autogenic relaxation therapy can be applied by nurses as an independent nursing intervention for parents of children who are being treated in hospital. Further research can be carried out by increasing the number of samples, and/or comparing the effect of autogenic relaxation therapy with other therapies on the anxiety of the patient's family.

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