



## OVERVIEW OF COLORING PLAY THERAPY ON THE ANXIETY LEVEL OF PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN A DUE TO HOSPITALIZATION AT THE PADAMARA HEALTH CENTER, PURBALINGGA REGENCY

### GAMBARAN TERAPI BERMAIN MEWARNAI TERHADAP TINGKAT KECEMASAN PADA ANAK USIA PRASEKOLAH AKIBAT HOSPITALISASI DI PUSKESMAS PADAMARA KABUPATEN PURBALINGGA

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#### Abstract

Background: Preschool-Aged children, aged 3–6 years, where the preschool period becomes a very fun time and get various new things. The weakness experienced by preschool children is that their immune system is weaker than adults, which makes them more susceptible to infections, as well as the risk of falls and injuries, so they require medical treatment in the hospital. Children who undergoing treatment at the Puskesmas can cause anxiety for them because they must leave their familiar, safe, loving, and enjoyable home environment. Hospitalization is a planned medical procedure that requires care and treatment but can trigger anxiety in children, both mentally and physically. Anxiety will cause children to become uncooperative and difficult to cooperate with health workers. During this process, children may face traumatic experiences that cause stress. One of the efforts to reduce the level of anxiety is by implementing play therapy, one of which is the coloring play therapy technique. Objective: This research describes the application of coloring play therapy on anxiety levels in preschool-aged children at Padamara Health Center. Methods: This research used a case study research design method. Results: This research indicate that before the intervention score was 25 (moderate anxiety) and after the intervention score was 9 (no anxiety). Conclusion: Coloring play therapy can reduce anxiety levels in preschool-aged children undergoing treatment at Padamara Health Center.

Keywords: Preschool Children, Coloring Therapy, Anxiety.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children are individuals who face many developmental changes from childhood to adolescence. One of these stages is the preschool age, which is between 3 to 6 years old. During this period, children are preparing to enter school, where their senses, sensory perception systems, and memory processes need to be prepared so they can learn. Learning at this stage occurs through play. Children need to be more physically active because their immune systems are weaker and less stable, making them more susceptible to illness. Preschoolers are also at risk of injury and falls that require hospitalization (Titiaji et al., 2024).

The experience of hospitalization is a significant factor that can affect a child's response. According to research conducted by Widiyanti (2022) on the description of anxiety levels in children based on hospitalization frequency, preschoolers who experience hospitalization for the first time have high levels of anxiety, and those who have had hospitalization experience more than once still experience moderate to high levels of anxiety.

Anxiety is a reaction to an unpleasant situation, manifesting as a combination of emotional processes that occur when an individual is faced with various pressures and stressors, such as frustration or internal conflict. Anxiety can be experienced in daily life by all living beings. Separation anxiety is common in preschoolers, who need to leave their safe and familiar environment.

The biggest fear during hospitalization for preschoolers is the fear that some part of their body will be damaged. Every procedure or treatment, painful or not, can trigger anxiety in preschoolers due to their limited understanding of their body (Titiaji et al., 2024).



According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), the latest data shows that 4-12% of children in the United States, around 3-6% of children in Germany, and 4-10% of children in Canada experience anxiety in hospitals (Apriliana et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the number of child hospitalizations increased by 19% in 2020. According to the Basic Health Research Survey, the average number of children undergoing hospitalization due to anxiety is 2.8% of the total, which is approximately 82,666 children.

Play therapy is an effective way to manage fear in children and can help them express their feelings through creativity. The goal of play therapy in hospitals is to reduce fear, anxiety, sadness, and tension, and to help children cope with stress due to hospitalization. Many studies have proven that play therapy can reduce anxiety in children (Fajariyah et al., 2024).

A study by Yulianah, Yumrotul, and Sri (2024) titled "Play Therapy and Anxiety Due to Hospitalization in Preschool-Age Children" found that play therapy significantly reduced anxiety in preschoolers. Another study by Andi, Dewi, and Rahmat (2023) titled "The Effect of Coloring Play Therapy on Anxiety Levels Due to Hospitalization in Preschool-Age Children" also found that coloring play therapy was effective in reducing anxiety levels in preschoolers.

Based on the previous explanation, the author feels motivated to conduct further research to present the latest data on "The Description of Coloring Play Therapy on Anxiety Levels in Preschool-Age Children Due to Hospitalization at Puskesmas Padamara, Purbalingga Regency".

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

In general, a structured, planned, and systematic activity with specific theoretical and practical goals is a scientific method. The case study design used by the author is descriptive in type. It utilizes a case study approach aimed at obtaining a comprehensive description or explanation of a nursing problem. This case study was conducted to determine the description of coloring play therapy on anxiety levels in preschool-age children due to hospitalization.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This case study was conducted at Puskesmas Padamara, located at Jl. Raya Padamara Km. 5, Padamara District, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java. The facilities available at this health center include an emergency department, inpatient rooms, laboratory, general polyclinic, and dental polyclinic. The Nakula Sadewa, Sadewa is one of the inpatient rooms specifically for children among several inpatient rooms at Puskesmas Padamara. The work system implemented consists of 3 shifts, namely morning, afternoon, and night shifts. This room treats pediatric patients with various types of diseases, especially those suffered by children who are being treated in the Nakula Sadewa room.

The researcher chose a respondent, An. A, because the respondent met the specified criteria, namely being between 3 to 6 years old and being treated at Puskesmas Padamara, with parental consent. During the 2-day management, play therapy with coloring techniques was administered once a day. The results of the assessment were obtained on Sunday, August 3,



2025, at 08:30, the client's mother, Mrs. D, reported that An. A had a fever, cough, runny nose, and vomiting. Then An. A was taken to the emergency department of Puskesmas Padamara at 08:13 and transferred to the inpatient ward at 14:45.

Upon assessment, Mrs. D stated that An. A was being hospitalized for the first time, and the patient's condition was often crying, wanting to go home. An. A appeared tense, restless, lethargic, pale, silent, and had difficulty concentrating when playing. Based on the physical examination results, the patient's consciousness was *compos mentis* with a moderate general condition, body temperature 37.1°C, RR: 24x/minute, pulse: 98x/minute, SPO2 97%, skin felt warm, and lips appeared pale and dry.

In this case study, the author focused on anxiety, which was evidenced by An. A's restlessness and difficulty interacting. By creating a therapeutic atmosphere to build trust through play activities, it can help the child feel calmer and distract them from tension. This can accelerate the healing process by creating a more positive and supportive environment. Play therapy is an effective way to reduce anxiety in preschool-age children by introducing them to medical situations through play, making them feel more comfortable and involved in their hospitalization experience.

The Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) was used as a measurement tool for anxiety levels. HARS is a tool to assess anxiety in preschool-age children, consisting of 14 questions, through observation and questioning the patient's parents. The scores given consist of 5 values, namely 0 for no symptoms, 1 for one symptom appearing, 2 for two symptoms appearing, 3 for more than two symptoms appearing, and 4 for all symptoms appearing.

Tabel 4. 1 Skor Kecemasan Sebelum dan Sesudah Pemberian Terapi Mewarnai

Hari, tanggal, waktu	Skor sebelum	Skor sesudah
Pertemuan pertama pada hari minggu, tanggal 3 Agustus 2025, pukul 09.00	Sebelum terapi mewarnai diberikan, responden menunjukkan tingkat kecemasan sedang dengan skor 25	Sesudah terapi mewarnai diberikan, responden menunjukkan tingkat kecemasan sedang dengan skor 22
Pertemuan kedua pada hari senin, tanggal 4 Agustus 2025, pukul 09.00	Sebelum terapi mewarnai diberikan, responden menunjukkan tidak ada kecemasan dengan skor 11	Sesudah terapi mewarnai diberikan, responden menunjukkan tidak ada kecemasan dengan skor 9

The results of the study showed a decrease in anxiety levels before and after the play therapy with coloring techniques. On the first day, the respondent's anxiety level decreased from a score of 25 (moderate anxiety) to a score of 11 (no anxiety), and on the second day, it decreased from a score of 22 (moderate anxiety) to a score of 9 (no anxiety). The observation



on the first day showed the respondent's tense facial expression and difficulty interacting, while on the second observation, the respondent appeared more cheerful, able to smile when meeting the researcher, and showed happiness after participating in the coloring therapy.

This is consistent with the research by Fajariyah et al. (2024), which showed that there was a decrease in anxiety levels in preschool-age children after being given play therapy with coloring techniques.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the research conducted by the researcher at Puskesmas Padamara, the researcher chose 1 respondent to apply play therapy using coloring techniques aimed at overcoming anxiety in preschool-age children for 2 days. From the research conducted on August 3, 2025, data was successfully obtained through interviews with the respondent's mother, showing the general identity of An. A, a 5-year-old female child who is a Muslim. Through direct observation, the level of anxiety in the respondent before coloring therapy showed a moderate level of anxiety with a score of 25, which was evident from the respondent's tense facial expression and difficulty interacting.

Almost all children experience discomfort in the hospital environment. Changes in the hospital room environment can also cause stress for them. For example, small and uncomfortable bedrooms, lack of cleanliness, lighting that is too bright or too dim, and so on. This noise can add to the child's fear, while the white color on the walls and curtains can make the child feel uncomfortable. Clothing and attributes used by nurses can also be one of the causes of hospitalization in children (Melynda et al., 2023).

Hospitalization can be an unpleasant experience for children, who may react in different ways depending on their understanding and experience. Lack of knowledge about the hospitalization process can cause children to experience anxiety and stress due to changes in routine, new environment, and difficulty adapting. Children who are hospitalized often face many pressures, including pain, lack of control, lack of privacy, and separation from home.

Play therapy with coloring techniques is one of the play activities that provides an opportunity for children to express themselves freely and is very therapeutic. Some ways children express themselves include channeling emotions with colors, where children often choose colors according to the emotions they are feeling. Dark colors (black, dark red) can reflect fear, anger, or sadness. Bright colors (yellow, light green, blue) can show comfort or joy, without having to say a word, their color choices can be a form of emotional expression (Herawati & Mariyani, 2023).

The coloring activity can also bring happiness, because preschool-age children are usually very active and imaginative, and they can still develop fine motor skills through coloring activities, even while undergoing treatment. After conducting play therapy with coloring techniques, there was a difference in the level of anxiety in preschool-age children who were treated before and after play therapy with coloring techniques in the inpatient room.

This is in line with the research conducted by Sudirman et al. (2023), which indicates that coloring therapy, although seemingly simple, is an effective way to reduce anxiety in children during treatment. From this, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of coloring therapy on the level of anxiety in preschool-age children.





Coloring is a fun activity, especially for preschool-age children, does not require a lot of energy, and can help improve emotional problems, release negative feelings, and improve children's skills. Preschool-age children generally enjoy illustrations of various things, especially those related to what they know and like. They often color simple pictures related to their world, such as animals, vehicles, flowers, and cartoon characters they like.

Anxiety is a mental state where a person is filled with feelings of worry and fear, accompanied by a feeling of certainty that something bad will happen (Nova et al., 2021). During hospitalization, children experience anxiety and stress due to changes in routine, environment, and difficulty adjusting to a new environment that is considered foreign, and tend to refuse to interact with health workers and medical procedures that are painful.

The anxiety experienced by children during hospitalization is a very important issue. If not addressed, children will refuse to receive treatment and care, which can affect their immune system. It can also lead to emotional or behavioral problems that can slow down the healing process and disease progression during care.

The most common response of children during hospitalization is seen in preschool-age children, including behaviors such as crying incessantly, refusing to eat, and showing aggressive behavior like shouting, hitting, biting, kicking, and being uncooperative with medical staff during treatment (Fajariyah et al., 2024).

Anxiety disorder is a feeling or subjective experience of an individual, as well as an emotional response that can cause discomfort due to uncertainty, feeling weak, and disturbances in cognitive, psychomotor, and physical reactions, such as difficulty sleeping, rapid heartbeat, and changes in vital signs.

The implementation of play therapy using coloring techniques began on the first day, August 3, 2025, at 09:00. The play therapy with coloring lasted for 20 minutes using a drawing paper chosen by the respondent, which was a picture of a ballerina, and crayons. Before the play therapy with coloring techniques was conducted, the initial anxiety level was 25, indicating moderate anxiety, which was evident from the respondent's tense facial expression and difficulty interacting.

After undergoing play therapy with coloring for 20 minutes, the anxiety level decreased to 22, indicating moderate anxiety, which was evident from the respondent's lethargic appearance and difficulty concentrating when playing. On the first day of observation, the child showed signs of anxiety, which was reflected in the choice of colors used during the coloring activity. The child dominantly used dark colors like brown, which is often associated with feelings of being closed off, uncomfortable, and emotional pressure.

The decrease in score indicates a positive change in the child's anxiety level, although it did not change categories. The coloring activity can help children express feelings that are difficult to convey verbally, especially in situations of anxiety due to hospitalization. Preschool-age children tend to be more responsive to play approaches, as their world is closely related to play activities.

On the second day, August 4, 2025, at 09:00, a play therapy session using coloring techniques was conducted for 20 minutes with a drawing paper chosen by the respondent, which was a picture of a butterfly. During the intervention on the second day, the results showed that before the play therapy with coloring techniques, the score decreased from 25 to 11, indicating no anxiety, which was evident from the respondent's more relaxed appearance and no difficulty interacting with the researcher.



Entering the second day, there was a significant change in the child's emotional expression. The child began to use bright colors like pink and yellow in their artwork. These colors reflect feelings of happiness, comfort, and openness of positive emotions (Herawati & Mariyani, 2023). This shows that the child's anxiety level has decreased, and the child has begun to feel more confident and safe in following activities.

After conducting play therapy with coloring techniques for 20 minutes, the anxiety level decreased to 9, indicating no anxiety. This decrease shows a positive emotional improvement, although in the same category. This shows that play therapy with coloring techniques still provides a relaxation and comfort effect, even in children who no longer show symptoms of anxiety.

The evaluation conducted by the researcher after the therapy showed a decrease in the level of anxiety in children after applying play therapy with coloring techniques. The researcher believes that play therapy with coloring techniques can reduce anxiety levels in children, consistent with previous studies that showed a significant effect of coloring therapy on anxiety levels in preschool-age children undergoing hospitalization.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the application of play therapy with coloring techniques in preschool-age children experiencing anxiety due to hospitalization at Puskesmas Padamara can reduce anxiety.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results about the description of coloring play therapy on anxiety levels in preschool-age children due to hospitalization at Puskesmas Padamara, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Before the intervention of coloring play therapy, the respondent's anxiety level was in the moderate category with a score of 25.
2. After the intervention of coloring play therapy, which lasted for 20 minutes over 2 days, the respondent's anxiety level was in the no anxiety category with a score of 9.

The anxiety score decreased from 25 to 9, which means a decrease of 16 points. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is an effect of play therapy using coloring techniques on reducing anxiety levels in preschool-age children who are hospitalized at Puskesmas Padamara.

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