Review

Addressing Anxiety Problems in Hospital Patients with Guided Imagery Therapy: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Anxiety problems are often experienced by patients in hospitals due to various factors, such as medical conditions, medical procedures, or unfamiliar environments. One of the non-pharmacological interventions that has been widely studied to manage anxiety is guided imagery therapy. Objective: This systematic review aims to evaluate the effectiveness of guided imagery therapy in addressing anxiety problems in hospital patients.*

Methods: *Literature searches were conducted on databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Pubmed. Article searches were carried out systematically from 2019-2024 using severalkeywords, namely "hemodialysis", or "guided imagery", or "anxiety", or "Patients in hospitals". Search for articles in English and Indonesia. Studies that met the inclusion criteria, i.e. experimental or quasi-experimental studies that evaluated the effects of guided imagery therapy on the anxiety levels of hospital patients, were further analysed. Data were extracted and compared to identify key findings.*

Results: *: Studies show that guided imagery therapy can significantly lower anxiety levels in hospital patients, both before and after certain procedures. Positive effects were seen more pronounced in patients who underwent the intervention over several sessions compared to a single session. Additionally, patients reported improved relaxation, mood, and an overall more positive experience during the treatment period.*

Conclusion: *: Guided imagery therapy is an effective and easy-to-apply approach to overcome anxiety in hospital patients. This intervention can be an additional option for health workers to improve the quality of health services, especially for patients with high levels of anxiety. Further studies are needed to explore the effects of these therapies in the context of the wider patient culture and population.*

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Introduction

Anxiety is one of the common psychological responses experienced by patients undergoing treatment in hospitals. Uncertain situations, serious disease diagnoses, invasive medical procedures, or even the atmosphere of the hospital itself can trigger deep emotional stress in

patients. Anxiety that lasts for a certain period of time not only affects the psychological well-being of patients, but can also negatively impact their physical health. For example, anxiety can lead to increased levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol, which have an impact on blood pressure, heart rate, and immune system. As a result, anxiety not only slows down the healing process but also increases the risk of other health complications (Sari & Fahrizal, 2022).

In medical practice, managing patient anxiety is often a significant challenge. Conventional treatment methods, such as the administration of anti-anxiety medications, have limitations, including the potential for side effects and considerable costs. Therefore, more and more medical professionals are looking for alternative or complementary interventions that can help effectively address anxiety without posing additional risks. One practical approach is guided imagery therapy (Lutfiani & Mariyati, 2023).

Guided imagery is a therapeutic technique that uses mental visualization to create a positive or calming image in the patient's mind. This process is usually guided by verbal instructions from the therapist or audio recordings specifically designed to help the patient imagine a peaceful and pleasant situation. This therapy is rooted in the principle that the mind can influence a person's physical and emotional state. Through positive visualization, patients can shift their focus from anxiety or fear to a deeper state of relaxation (Sulasri et al., 2022).

The advantage of guided imagery therapy lies in its non-invasive, easy-to-apply, and flexible nature. This therapy does not require special equipment, so various levels of society can access it. Additionally, guided imagery can be tailored to individual needs, allowing for a more personalized and relevant approach for each patient. Studies have shown that guided imagery can help reduce anxiety in patients with various medical conditions, such as pre-operative patients, cancer patients, patients with heart disease, and those undergoing intensive care in the inpatient unit (Antara et al., 2022).

In hospitals, the implementation of guided imagery has great potential to support a holistic approach to care. Hospitals not only play a role in treating physical illnesses but also have the responsibility to maintain the psychological well-being of patients. By integrating guided imagery into clinical practice, hospitals can provide interventions that are patient-friendly, cost-effective, and able to improve the overall care experience (Yijing et al., 2015).

The systematic review in this study aims to explore more deeply the effectiveness of guided imagery therapy in overcoming patient anxiety problems in hospitals. With a better understanding of the benefits and applications of this approach, it is hoped that hospitals can adopt guided imagery as one of the strategies for improving the quality of health services, supporting holistic patient recovery, and positively impacting the patient experience during treatment.

Methods

Study Design

This research article employs a systematic review design, following the standard PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure a structured and comprehensive review process.

Eligibility Criteria

This article uses the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome)

method to establish inclusion and exclusion criteria in a randomized review of studies. Here are the requirements:

Table 1. PICO

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	*Patients in hospitals*	Apart from *Patients in hospitals*
Intervention	*Guided Imagery Therapy*	-
Comparison	Do not use comparison factors.	-
Outcomes	Anxiety	-
Study design and type of publication	All research designs	Systematic review
Year of publication	2019-2024	< 2019
Language	English and Indonesia	-

Search Strategy

The databases utilized for this systematic review include Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. Articles were systematically searched from 2019 to 2024 using a combination of keywords such as "hemodialysis," "guided imagery," "anxiety," and "patients in hospitals." The search included articles written in both English and Indonesian.

Study Selection and Synthesis

The feasibility assessment of the articles was conducted by reviewing full-text articles. Articles deemed relevant and suitable were included in this literature review. The selection process and results are illustrated in the PRISMA diagram, resulting in the identification of the nine most appropriate articles.

Results

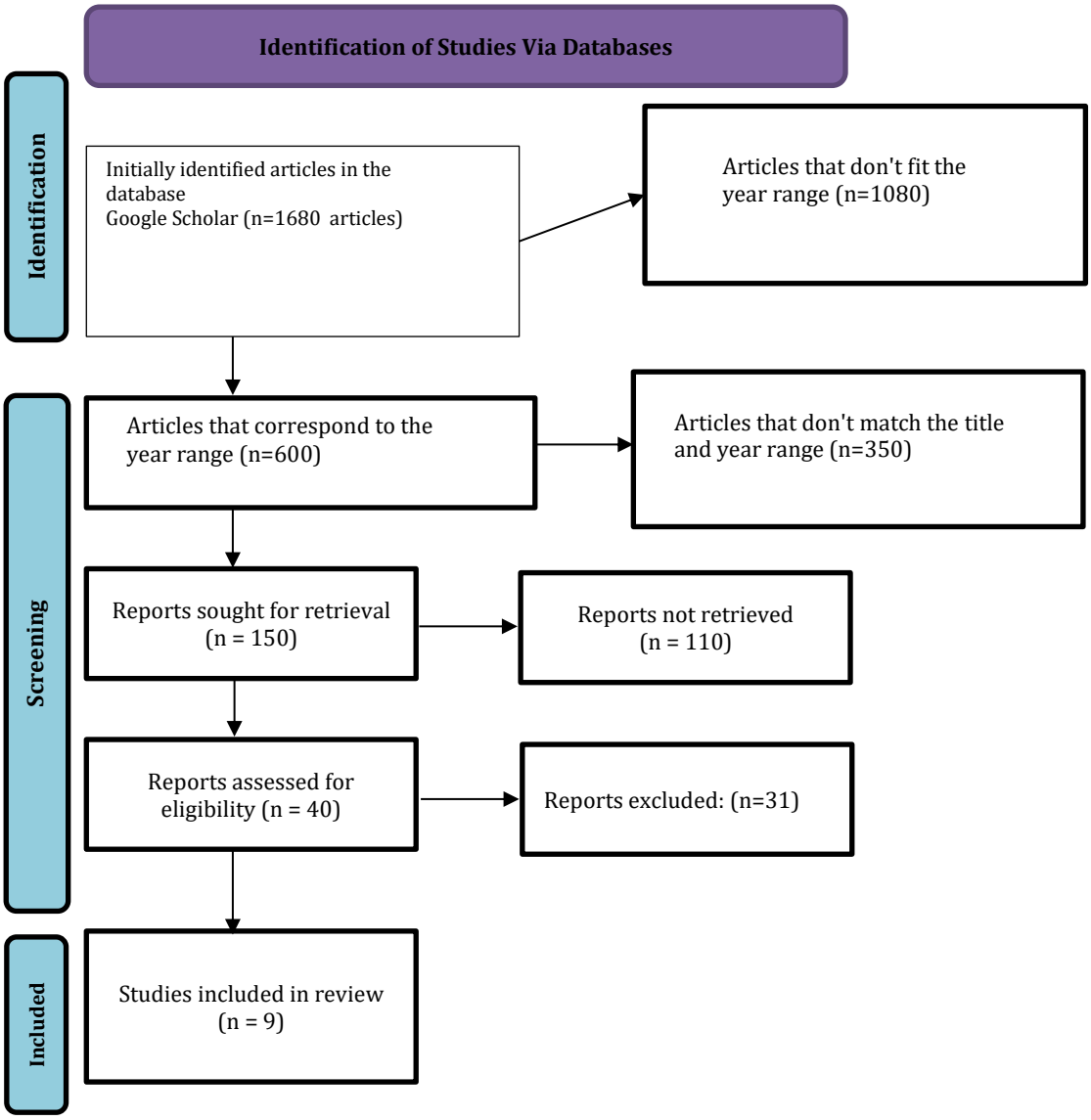

Figure 1. Flowchart

The following are the results of the systematic review of the 9 best articles, along with the results of their research:

Table 1. Characteristic study

No	Title, Author, and Year of Publication	Research Results
1	Effect of guided imagery on anxiety, muscle pain, and vital signs in patients with COVID-19: A randomized controlled trial (Parizad et al., 2021)	Conclusions: Guided imagery, as a cost-effective complementary therapy, is recommended for managing anxiety and pain in patients with COVID-19.
2	Application of Spiritual Guided Imagery Relaxation Technique to Reduce Anxiety in Patients with Chronic Renal Failure: Case Study (Istiqomah & Mahyuvi, 2023)	Spiritual Guided Imagery Relaxation Therapy has proven to be effective in alleviating anxiety and can serve as an alternative approach for managing anxiety in patients with Chronic Kidney Failure. This therapy also empowers ward nurses to implement independent interventions by employing prompt response measures, enabling patients to achieve optimal outcomes.
3	Efektivitas Penerapan Intervensi Berbasis Adaptasi dan Guided Imagery pada Pasien Gagal Ginjal Kronik yang Menjalani Hemodialysis (Toding & Masfuri, 2021)	After 30 days of intervention, there was a notable reduction in anxiety, an improvement in sleep quality, a decrease in blood pressure, and an enhancement in self-management among hemodialysis patients.
4	Anxiety of Patients Undergoing Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): The Effectiveness of Guided Mental Imagery (Shojaie et al., 2024)	The results indicated that guided imagery effectively reduced anxiety levels in patients undergoing MRI.
5	Effect of guided imagery relaxation on anxiety in cervical cancer: randomized clinical trial (Santana et al., 2023)	Guided imagery relaxation via virtual reality demonstrated a reduction in anxiety among women with cervical cancer undergoing radiochemotherapy, offering potential benefits for clinical practice.
6	The Effectiveness of Imagery Therapy Guide on Pain and Anxiety in URS Perioperative Patients in Lontara Room 2 Lower Front of Urological Surgery, RSUP Dr. Wahidin Sudirohusodo Makassar (Sriwahyuni et al., 2023)	The implementation of evidence-based practice using guided imagery as a preoperative therapy has been shown to reduce both pain and anxiety levels in patients.
7	The Effect of Guide Imagery Relaxation Techniques on Anxiety Levels of Pre-Op Vitrectomy Patients at Smec Eye Specialist Hospital Medan in 2021 (Idris, 2022)	The anxiety level of pre-op vitrectomy patients before the guide imagery relaxation technique was obtained.
8	Application Of Guided Imagery Relaxation To Reduce Anxiety In Cervical Cancer Patients (Lutfiani & Mariyati, 2023)	The results of the case study showed that there was a decrease in anxiety experienced by patients after being given guided imagery relaxation therapy for 3 days so that anxiety was expected to decrease. Families were expected to be able to apply guided imagery relaxation.
9	Application of Guided Imagery in Post-Surgery Laparotomy with Anxiety (Sari & Fahrizal, 2022)	The results of this study were found before the anxiety score was 22 in the moderate anxiety category. After 4 days of therapy in the hospital,

No	Title, Author, and Year of Publication	Research Results
		the anxiety score became 5 in the non-anxious category, and this proves that guided imagination therapy is effective in reducing postoperative patient anxiety.

Discussion

Studies show that guided imagery therapy significantly lowers anxiety levels in patients, particularly in Pre-operative patients. Reduces anxiety before major surgery, such as heart surgery or orthopedics. Patients with chronic diseases: Low anxiety levels in patients with cancer, kidney failure, or other conditions that require intensive care. Patients in the ICU: Assisting patients with disorientation or anxiety in the intensive care unit. Physiological relaxation: Increases parasympathetic activity and lowers heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones such as cortisol. Mental distraction: Helps the patient distract from pain or discomfort. Increased optimism: Encourages a positive mindset by visualizing a pleasant environment or good treatment outcomes. Clinical Implementation of this therapy is usually carried out for 15-30 minutes with the guidance of audio recordings or instructions from the therapist. It can be applied independently or as part of multimodal therapy, psychological counseling, or pharmacological interventions (Istiqomah & Mahyuvi, 2023).

The use of directed imagination therapy is effective as an additional intervention to reduce anxiety. However, its implementation depends on The patient's willingness to be actively involved in the process. Training of therapists to provide practical guidance. The availability of facilities such as audio recordings that support this therapy. Some challenges include the lack of research in specific populations (e.g., children or patients with cognitive impairment) and the variation in outcomes influenced by individual preferences for these techniques. Guided imagery therapy is a promising method for addressing anxiety in hospital patients. Integrating these therapies into treatment protocols can significantly improve the psychological well-being of patients. However, more research is needed to expand the application and evaluate its effectiveness in a group of broader patients (Parizad et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Guided imagery therapy is effective in reducing anxiety symptoms in patients in hospitals. This technique provides immediate relaxation and improves the quality of life of patients with anxiety disorders. Some studies suggest that the use of guided imagery can lower levels of perioperative anxiety in hospitalized adult patients. In addition, guided imagery is also effective in reducing pain and opioid analgesic use in inpatients. Therefore, guided imagery therapy is a safe and easy-to-implement intervention to overcome anxiety problems in patients in hospital settings.

Authors Contributions

Throughout the process of conducting this literature review, each author made significant contributions: one author conceptualized the study scope, developed search strategies, and performed systematic literature searches across multiple databases; another author critically appraised the selected literature, synthesized key findings, and identified

thematic patterns and research gaps; while a third author meticulously drafted and revised the manuscript, ensuring alignment with research objectives, and incorporating feedback from co-authors.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest

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