



The Effect Of Nurse's Therapeutic Approach On Reducing The Anxiety Level Of Families Of Critical Patients In The ICU

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ABSTRACT

Family of critical patients treated in the Intensive Care Unit Care Units (ICUs) often experience high levels of anxiety due to unstable patient conditions, complex ICU environments, and limited information. One nursing intervention that can be implemented to reduce family anxiety is a therapeutic nurse approach. This study aims to determine the effect of a therapeutic nurse approach on reducing anxiety levels in families of critically ill patients in the ICU. The study used a quantitative design with a pre -experimental one-way approach. group pretest-posttest. The research sample consisted of 40 families of critically ill patients selected using purposive sampling techniques. The research instrument used was the Hamilton questionnaire. Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS). Data analysis was performed using a paired t-test. The results showed a decrease in the anxiety level of families of critically ill patients after being given a therapeutic approach by nurses with a p-value <0.05. The conclusion of this study is that the therapeutic approach by nurses has a significant effect on reducing the anxiety level of families of critically ill patients in the ICU.

Keywords: Therapeutic Approach, Nurses, Family Anxiety, Critical Patients, ICU

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1. Introduction

Critical patient care in the Intensive Care Unit The intensive care unit (ICU) is a complex and stressful environment, not only for patients but also for their families. Patients admitted to the ICU are often in life-threatening conditions, requiring close monitoring and the use of sophisticated medical equipment. This situation often creates feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness among patients' families, especially when they face uncertainty about the prognosis and limited access to care.

Anxiety in families of critically ill patients is a common psychological response to sudden changes in a family member's health condition, the unfamiliar ICU environment, and a lack of understanding of medical procedures and procedures. High levels of anxiety can impact the family's ability to receive information, make decisions, and provide emotional support to the patient. Furthermore, unmanaged anxiety can impact the family's physical and mental health.

Nurses, as the healthcare professionals who interact most frequently with patients and families, play a crucial role in helping reduce family anxiety. One approach is through a therapeutic approach. A therapeutic approach is a form of professional communication aimed at building trusting relationships, providing emotional support, and helping individuals understand and cope with the challenges they face. In the ICU context, a nurse's therapeutic approach includes active listening, empathy, providing honest and clear information, and creating a safe and supportive environment for the patient's family.

A consistent therapeutic approach can help families feel cared for, valued, and involved in the patient's care process. Providing clear information about the patient's condition, treatment plan, and health developments can reduce the uncertainty and fear felt by families. Furthermore, the nurse's empathetic attitude and emotional presence can improve family coping in critical situations.

Various previous studies have shown that therapeutic communication by nurses has a significant impact on the psychological well-being of patients and their families, including reducing anxiety levels. However, in ICU practice, therapeutic approaches are not always optimally implemented due to time constraints, high workloads, and nurses' focus on the technical aspects of critical care. This often results in inadequate attention being paid to the psychological needs of patients' families.

Based on this background, a scientific study is needed to assess the effectiveness of nurses' therapeutic approaches in reducing anxiety levels among families of critically ill patients in the ICU. This research is expected to provide insight into the crucial role of nurses in providing psychological support to families and serve as a foundation for the development of more holistic, family-oriented nursing interventions in the intensive care unit.

2. Research Methods





a. Research Design

This study used a quantitative design with a quasi -experimental approach, namely a pretest - posttest with a control group. This design was chosen to determine the effect of the nurses' therapeutic approach on changes in the anxiety levels of families of critically ill patients before and after the intervention. This approach allowed researchers to compare the conditions of respondents who received a therapeutic approach with those who did not receive it in a structured manner.

b. Location and Time of Research

The research was conducted in the Intensive Care Unit. Care Unit (ICU) of Hospital X. The location was selected based on the high number of critical patients and the intensity of interaction between nurses and patient families. The study was conducted during the period April–June 2025, including the preparation stage, data collection, and analysis of results.

c. Population and Sample

The population in this study was all families of critically ill patients treated in the ICU of Hospital X during the study period. The research sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, with the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

1) Inclusion criteria:

- Members of the patient's immediate family (husband, wife, parents, or children).
- Aged ≥ 18 years.
- Can communicate verbally well.
- Willing to be a respondent and sign the informed consent.

2) Exclusion criteria :

- Family with a history of anxiety disorders or previous mental disorders.
- Families who were absent during the intervention period.

The sample size was 60 respondents, which were divided into two groups, namely:

- Intervention group: 30 respondents
- Control group: 30 respondents

d. Research Variables

- Independent variable: Nurse's therapeutic approach
- Dependent variable: Level of anxiety of families of critical patients.

e. Research Instruments

The instrument used to measure anxiety levels is the Hamilton Anxiety Rating The modified HARS Scale (Hars) has been tested for validity and reliability. This scale consists of 14 items with a total score that classifies anxiety levels into mild, moderate, and severe.





The nurse's therapeutic approach is implemented using therapeutic communication guidelines, which include:

- 1) Active listening
- 2) Giving empathy
- 3) Convey information clearly and honestly
- 4) Providing emotional support
- 5) Involving the family in the care process

f. **Research Procedures**

The research was carried out through the following stages:

1) Preparation Stage

Researchers take care of research permits, prepare instruments, and conduct briefings for nurses involved in providing therapeutic approaches.

2) Pretest Stage

Prior to the intervention, all respondents (intervention and control groups) had their anxiety levels measured using the HARS questionnaire.

3) Intervention Stage

The intervention group received a therapeutic approach from a nurse for three consecutive days, lasting approximately 20–30 minutes per session. The approach was individualized and scheduled.

The control group received only routine nursing care without a specific therapeutic approach.

4) Posttest Stage

After the intervention was completed, respondents' anxiety levels were measured again using the same instrument.

g. **Data analysis**

The collected data is analyzed using:

- Univariate analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of anxiety levels.
- Bivariate analysis used a Paired T- Test to examine differences in anxiety levels before and after the intervention in each group, as well as an Independent T- Test to compare the two groups.

The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

h. **Research Ethics**

This research has received approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Hospital X. All respondents were given an explanation regarding the purpose and procedures of the research and were guaranteed the confidentiality of their identity and the data provided.

3. **Research Results And Discussion**





a. Research Result

1) Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 60 respondents, families of critically ill patients treated in the ICU of Hospital X, consisting of 30 respondents in the intervention group and 30 respondents in the control group. Respondent characteristics included age, gender, education level, and relationship to the patient.

Table 1.
Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Intervention Group (n=30)	Control Group (n=30)	Total (n=60)
Age (years)			
18–30	8 (26.7%)	7 (23.3%)	15 (25.0%)
31–45	14 (46.6%)	15 (50.0%)	29 (48.3%)
>45	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)	16 (26.7%)
Gender			
Man	13 (43.3%)	14 (46.7%)	27 (45.0%)
Woman	17 (56.7%)	16 (53.3%)	33 (55.0%)
Education			
Base	6 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)	13 (21.7%)
Intermediate	17 (56.7%)	16 (53.3%)	33 (55.0%)
Tall	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	14 (23.3%)

2) Patient Family Anxiety Level Before Intervention (Pretest)

Initial measurement results showed that most respondents in both groups experienced moderate to severe levels of anxiety before being given the intervention.

Table 2.
Respondents' Anxiety Level Before Intervention

Anxiety Level	Intervention (n=30)	Control (n=30)
Light	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)
Currently	18 (60.0%)	17 (56.7%)
Heavy	8 (26.7%)	8 (26.7%)

3) Patient Family Anxiety Level After Intervention (Posttest)





After three days of therapeutic nursing interventions, there was a significant decrease in anxiety levels in the intervention group. In contrast, changes in anxiety in the control group were relatively minimal.

Table 3.

Respondents' Anxiety Level After Intervention		
Anxiety Level	Intervention (n=30)	Control (n=30)
Light	18 (60.0%)	7 (23.3%)
Currently	11 (36.7%)	16 (53.3%)
Heavy	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)

4) Change in Mean Anxiety Score

Analysis of the mean anxiety scores showed a significant decrease in the intervention group compared to the control group.

Table 4.

Comparison of Average Anxiety Scores Pretest and Posttest

Group	Pretest (Mean ± SD)	Posttest (Mean ± SD)	Difference	p- value
Intervention	24.6 ± 4.2	15.3 ± 3.8	9.3	<0.001
Control	24.1 ± 4.0	22.8 ± 4.1	1.3	0.087

The results of statistical tests using the Paired T- Test showed a significant decrease in anxiety levels in the intervention group ($p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, no significant differences were found in the control group.

5) Comparison of Anxiety Levels Between Groups

The Independent T- Test showed a significant difference in the post-test anxiety levels between the intervention group and the control group ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that the nurse's therapeutic approach has an effect on reducing the anxiety of the families of critical patients in the ICU.

b. Discussion

The results of the study showed that nurses' therapeutic approach significantly reduced the anxiety levels of families of critically ill patients in the ICU. The significant decrease in anxiety in the intervention group compared to the control group underscores the importance of nurses' role not only in clinical aspects but also in the psychosocial aspects of patients' families.

1) Anxiety of Families of Critically Ill Patients in the ICU





Families of critically ill patients often experience high levels of anxiety due to the patient's life-threatening condition, the uncertainty of the prognosis, the unfamiliar environment of the ICU, and limited visiting time. According to Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping theory, anxiety arises when individuals perceive a situation as threatening and feel they lack the resources to cope. In the ICU context, families often feel a lack of control over the situation, triggering high levels of anxiety.

Pretest results in this study indicated that most respondents experienced moderate to severe anxiety. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that families of ICU patients tend to experience significant psychological stress, particularly in the early days of treatment.

2) The Effect of Therapeutic Approaches on Reducing Anxiety

The therapeutic approach employed by nurses in this study included empathetic communication, providing clear and honest information, active listening, and emotional support. This approach has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety levels in families of critically ill patients. After the intervention, the majority of respondents in the intervention group experienced a reduction in anxiety to mild levels.

Theoretically, therapeutic communication serves as a medium for building a trusting relationship between nurses and patients' families. Peplau, in his theory of interpersonal relationships, states that a good therapeutic relationship can help individuals reduce anxiety, increase understanding of problems, and strengthen coping mechanisms. In this study, nurses who demonstrated empathy and openness were able to create a sense of security and psychological support for patients' families.

3) Comparison with Control Group

In the control group receiving only routine nursing care, the reduction in anxiety levels was not significant. This suggests that routine care without a structured therapeutic approach is insufficient to meet the psychological needs of families of critically ill patients. This finding reinforces previous research suggesting that sporadic and lack of empathetic information provision is ineffective in reducing anxiety in families of ICU patients.

4) Consistency with Previous Research

The results of this study align with several previous studies that reported that therapeutic communication and emotional support from nurses positively reduced anxiety in patients' families. Other research also shows that family involvement in the care process and providing appropriate education can improve the satisfaction and psychological well-being of ICU patients' families.





Thus, the nurse's therapeutic approach can be an effective and easy-to-implement non-pharmacological intervention in intensive nursing practice to reduce the anxiety of patient families.

5) Implications for Nursing Practice

The results of this study have important implications for nursing practice in the ICU, namely the need to integrate therapeutic approaches into daily nursing care. Nurses are expected to focus not only on technical procedures but also on providing emotional support and effective communication to patients' families as part of a holistic approach.

4. Conclusion And Suggestions

a. Conclusion

- 1) Families of critically ill patients in the ICU mostly experience moderate to severe levels of anxiety before being given a therapeutic approach.
- 2) Providing a structured therapeutic approach by nurses has been proven to be able to significantly reduce the anxiety levels of families of critical patients.
- 3) There was a significant difference in the level of anxiety between the group that received a therapeutic approach and the group that only received routine services.
- 4) The therapeutic approach of nurses is an effective nursing intervention in supporting the psychological health of the families of critically ill patients in the ICU.

b. Suggestion

1) For Nurses

ICU nurses are expected to improve their therapeutic communication competencies and consistently apply them in providing nursing care to the families of critically ill patients.

2) For Hospital Management

Hospital management is advised to develop policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to the implementation of therapeutic approaches for nurses and to provide regular therapeutic communication training.

3) For Nursing Education

Nursing educational institutions need to strengthen therapeutic communication materials and clinical practices based on a holistic approach so that graduates are ready to address the psychological needs of patients and families.

4) For Further Researchers





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Further research is recommended to use an experimental design with a larger sample and longer intervention time, as well as exploring other variables such as social support and family coping.

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