

Effectiveness of Mindfulness Therapy on Anxiety among Elderly Residents at Panti Sosial Tresna Werdha Natar

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Older adults are more likely to experience anxiety disorders than depression. Common psychosocial problems in this population include loneliness, sadness, depression, and anxiety. Anxiety among older adults is often associated with fear of death, loss of independence, and feelings of abandonment after relocation to residential care facilities. This study aimed to determine the effect of mindfulness therapy on anxiety levels among older adults living in a residential care home.

Methods: This quantitative study employed a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest approach. A total of 38 older adults with anxiety were recruited through purposive sampling from a residential care home in South Lampung, Indonesia. Anxiety levels were measured before and after the intervention, and the data were analyzed using a paired-samples *t*-test.

Results: The mean anxiety score decreased from 21.05 before the intervention to 16.39 after mindfulness therapy. The paired-samples *t*-test showed a statistically significant reduction in anxiety levels ($p < 0.001$), indicating that mindfulness therapy effectively reduced anxiety among older adults.

Conclusion: Mindfulness therapy significantly reduced anxiety levels among older adults living in a residential care home. These findings suggest that mindfulness therapy can be considered an effective non-pharmacological nursing intervention for managing anxiety in older adults.

Keywords: anxiety; mindfulness therapy; Elderly

Introduction

Elderly people are more likely to experience anxiety disorders than depression. The most common psychosocial problems among the elderly include loneliness, sadness, depression, and anxiety. Anxiety experienced by the elderly is generally due to fear of death, fear of not having

their decisions respected by the family, fear of being unable to be productive in old age, and feeling abandoned or exiled to a nursing home. Age, gender, marital status, and education are all important factors influencing the anxiety experienced by the elderly. Another factor influencing anxiety is spiritual needs (Ardinata et al., 2024).

The number of elderly people in 2025 is predicted to reach 33.69 million, increasing to 48.19 million by 2035. The elderly population in Indonesia after 2010 is predicted to increase more rapidly than the global elderly population. There has been an increase in the percentage of the elderly group in Indonesia since 2013 (8.9% in Indonesia and 13.4% globally) to 2050 (21.4% in Indonesia and 25.3% globally) and 2010 (41% in Indonesia and 35.1% globally). This increase in percentage occurs because the increase in high life expectancy will affect the number of elderly population from year to year. Indonesia has been included in the group of countries with an aging structure (aging population) since 2000 because the percentage of the elderly population exceeds 7%. There are approximately 29.3 million elderly people in Indonesia in 2021. There are more elderly in urban areas (53.75%) than elderly in rural areas (46.25%), and almost three out of ten households in Indonesia are inhabited by elderly. (Amartya Noor et al., 2023)

According to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, anxiety increases by 2.5 percent annually, with a rate of 2.43 percent in women and 0.07 percent in men. An estimated 5% of the 898 million people worldwide suffer from acute and chronic anxiety, with a female-to-male ratio of 2:1 (Dauri et al., 2024). According to data from the Ministry of Health (2019), anxiety disorders rank second among mental disorders in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health (2021) reported that 18,373 people suffer from anxiety disorders, representing a 6.8% increase in the Indonesian population (Ulfianasari et al., 2022).

A pre-survey conducted on November 5, 2024, at the Tresna Werdha Social Home for the Elderly in Natar, South Lampung, revealed that 38 of 70 elderly individuals experienced anxiety. In addition to daily activities, the pre-survey also revealed that the elderly also have religious guidance at the prayer room every Monday from 10:00 to 11:00. Social and motivational guidance is offered on Tuesdays; skills guidance is offered on Wednesdays; religious guidance is offered again on Thursdays; physical exercise is offered on Fridays; cleaning of the guesthouse and surrounding area is offered on Saturdays; and religious guidance is offered again on Sundays.

The conclusion from the study on the Effect of Mindfulness Cognitive Therapy on Anxiety Levels in COVID-19 Patients in the Isolation Room at Tangerang City Hospital in 2021 was that before receiving mindfulness therapy, the majority of patients in the COVID-19 isolation room experienced severe anxiety (15 patients, 48.4%). After receiving mindfulness therapy, the majority experienced mild anxiety (13 patients, 41.9%). The Wilcoxon test yielded a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that H_0 was rejected. Therefore, there was an effect of mindfulness cognitive therapy on anxiety levels in COVID-19 patients in the isolation room at Tangerang City Hospital in 2021 (Wicaksono & Wahyu, 2023).

Mindfulness therapy is effective in reducing anxiety levels in the elderly. Mindfulness interventions have several positive qualities that emerge consciously, including: non-judgment, non-coercion, acceptance, awareness, openness, empathy, gentleness, gratitude, and compassion. This will bring energy, clarity of thought, and happiness, thereby reducing anxiety levels in the elderly later in life, which can ultimately improve their health (Dauri et al., 2024).

Considering the high prevalence of anxiety among older adults and the potential benefits of mindfulness therapy, this study aimed to examine the effect of mindfulness therapy on anxiety levels among older adults living in a residential care home in South Lampung, Indonesia.

Objective

This study aimed to examine the effect of mindfulness therapy on anxiety levels among older adults residing in a residential care home in South Lampung, Indonesia.

Method

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest approach. The study was conducted among older adults residing at the Panti Sosial Tresna Werdha Natar Residential Care Home, South Lampung, Indonesia. A total of 38 older adults who experienced anxiety were recruited using purposive sampling.

Participants' anxiety levels were assessed before and after the mindfulness therapy intervention using a standardized anxiety assessment instrument. The pretest was administered prior to the intervention to establish baseline anxiety levels, while the posttest was conducted after completion of the intervention to evaluate changes in anxiety levels.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a paired-samples t-test to compare anxiety scores before and after the intervention. Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Effect of Mindfulness Therapy on Anxiety Levels Among Older Adults

Anxiety Level	n	Mean	SD	P-value
Before therapy	38	21.05	4.490	0.000
After therapy	38	16.39	4.676	

Table 1 presents the anxiety scores of participants before and after the mindfulness therapy intervention. Before the intervention, the mean anxiety score was 21.05 ± 4.49 , which decreased to 16.39 ± 4.68 after the intervention. The paired-samples t-test demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in anxiety levels following mindfulness therapy ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that mindfulness therapy significantly reduced anxiety levels among older adults residing in the residential care home.

Discussion

This study demonstrated that mindfulness therapy significantly reduced anxiety levels among older adults living in a residential care home. The significant decrease in mean anxiety scores after the intervention indicates that mindfulness therapy is an effective non-pharmacological nursing intervention for anxiety management. These findings suggest that mindfulness practices can enhance emotional regulation and psychological well-being in older adults.

Older adults are particularly vulnerable to anxiety due to age-related physical decline, loss of independence, chronic illnesses, social isolation, and concerns about mortality. Persistent anxiety may activate the sympathetic nervous system, leading to physiological responses such as increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and rapid breathing. Therefore, effective nursing interventions are essential to minimize both psychological and physiological consequences of anxiety.

Mindfulness therapy encourages individuals to focus on present-moment experiences with acceptance and without judgment. Through breathing awareness and attention regulation, participants learn to observe their thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. This process promotes relaxation, improves emotional control, and decreases excessive physiological arousal associated with anxiety.

The present findings are consistent with previous studies reporting the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in reducing anxiety. Sari et al. (2023) reported that mindfulness therapy decreased anxiety and depression while improving self-awareness, cognitive function, and emotional regulation. Similarly, Hidayah et al. (2022) found that Islamic spiritual mindfulness significantly reduced anxiety among older adults with hypertension. Comparable findings were also reported by Wicaksono and Wahyu (2023), who demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety among patients with COVID-19 following mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. In addition, Rohmatun and Maryatun (2022) observed decreased anxiety among nursing students after mindfulness intervention, suggesting that the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness extend across different populations and clinical settings.

The effectiveness of mindfulness therapy may be explained by its ability to improve attention regulation, emotional acceptance, and adaptive coping strategies. By fostering present-moment awareness, older adults become better able to manage distressing thoughts, reduce excessive worry, and respond more calmly to stressful situations. These psychological changes may contribute to improved autonomic nervous system regulation and overall mental well-being.

From a nursing perspective, mindfulness therapy is practical, inexpensive, and easy to implement within residential care settings. As a non-pharmacological intervention, it can complement routine nursing care without increasing medication burden or adverse effects. Regular implementation may contribute to better psychological health and quality of life among older adults residing in long-term care facilities.

Despite these promising findings, this study has several limitations. The use of a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group limits causal inference, and the relatively small sample size from a single residential care home may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should employ randomized controlled trials with larger and more diverse samples to further confirm the effectiveness of mindfulness therapy among older adults..

Conclusion

Mindfulness therapy significantly reduced anxiety levels among older adults living in a residential care home. The findings indicate that the intervention effectively decreased the mean anxiety score following the mindfulness therapy program, with a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest measurements ($p < 0.001$). These results support the use of mindfulness therapy as an effective non-pharmacological nursing intervention for managing anxiety in older adults. Future studies are recommended to include larger sample sizes and control groups to strengthen the evidence regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness therapy.

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