

Nursing Care of Safety and Comfort Needs Using Breathing Meditation Therapy to Reduce Stress in the Elderly

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study was motivated by the many problems of stress levels experienced by the elderly at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home.

Objectives: The objective is to determine the application of Breathing Meditation therapy in reducing stress levels in the elderly at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home.

Methods: This study used a Case Study method with a Pre-test Post-test design with two elderly clients selected purposively. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and PSS-10 questionnaires.

Results: The results showed that after being given Breathing Meditation therapy for 5 consecutive days, both subjects experienced a decrease in stress levels from moderate to mild.

Conclusions: This study concludes that Breathing Meditation therapy can help reduce stress levels in the elderly at the Social Home. It is recommended that this therapy be used as one of the non-pharmacological alternatives in the stress management program at the Social Home.

Keyword: Breathing Meditation, Stress, Elderly.

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Introduction

Older individuals, or seniors, are classified as those aged 60 years or older, and they experience a series of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual transformations in the final stages of their lives (In Novriyanti Ali et al., 2023).

One of the most striking shifts is a decline in the biological dimension, which is usually seen in a decline in physical condition. In old age, people often face difficulties in carrying out daily activities, changes in family structure, the loss of a spouse or loved one, and reduced physical abilities, which can increase psychological stress, one of which is stress (Jenau et al., 2021).

Information from various studies shows that the global elderly population is experiencing significant growth, coinciding with increasing life expectancy and declining birth rates. In Indonesia, the proportion of the elderly population is predicted to reach more than 19% by 2045, making it a major focus in the field of health and well-being (Tisfah et al., 2025).

According to a study by (Cicuh & Agung, 2022), Indonesia is experiencing a significant surge in its elderly population as part of the demographic dividend shift. Data shows that the elderly constitute the fastest-growing segment of the population, and signs of population aging are already visible in some regions. This situation has resulted in high demand for healthcare services, social support, and care methods that focus more on the psychological and emotional well-being of the elderly.

In addition to physical changes, the elderly are also vulnerable to psychological disorders, particularly stress. Research shows that psychological disorders such as stress are more common in the elderly than other physical disorders (Putri et al., 2023).

When someone struggles to cope with or manage stress effectively, it is more likely to lead to psychological problems. An examination of current challenges shows that emotional states can trigger anxiety, fear, unpredictable mood swings, and increased sensitivity, which can lead to prolonged stress and ultimately to feelings of depression (Putri et al., 2023).

According to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2023, approximately 14% of the global elderly population experiences mental health problems, particularly depression and anxiety, often caused by factors such as social isolation, role loss, and long-term illness.

In Indonesia, although specific data on stress levels among the elderly are not always available, research indicates that a significant number of older adults experience distress ranging from mild to severe (Iin Novriyanti Ali et al., 2023).

In general, stress management involves a variety of approaches, including both pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical methods. Several studies have shown that deep breathing relaxation therapy can significantly reduce anxiety and stress levels in the elderly when practiced regularly, making it a simple and effective non-pharmacological intervention (Jannah et al., 2024).

Non-pharmaceutical approaches include techniques such as relaxation meditation, aromatherapy, laughter therapy, and breathing meditation. Numerous studies have shown that meditation offers various benefits in addressing stress-related issues. One method that can be used to manage and prevent stress, especially in older adults, is the use of breathing meditation therapy (Jenau et al., 2021).

This is further supported by findings from a systematic review conducted by (Lindayani et al., 2020), which found that mindfulness practices, including meditation methods focused on breathing, significantly reduced levels of depression and stress among older adults. These results confirm the effectiveness of breathing therapy as a safe, non-drug method.

Mindfulness practices, which involve full awareness of one's breathing and one's own condition, have been shown to be associated with increased psychological well-being and reduced stress in the elderly, and can therefore be used as a non-pharmacological approach to stress management in the elderly population (Yustisia et al., 2025)

Meditation focused on breath regulation has shown significant effectiveness in calming the mind and improving focus. This practice can be done silently while regulating the breath for approximately fifteen minutes. The goal of this technique is to induce a shift in consciousness, allowing individuals to reach a different state of awareness that can evoke pleasant feelings such as calmness, serenity, and joy (Jenau et al., 2021).

Meditation is considered a method for achieving emotional calm and balance, helping to create a better harmony between emotional well-being and physical health. Mindfulness meditation has been widely applied in elderly populations and has been shown to promote relaxation and psychological comfort, contributing to stress reduction (Sulistiyowati et al., 2022).

Therefore, meditation practices focused on breathing play a vital role in reducing stress (Jenau et al., 2021).

Method

This research is a descriptive investigation using a case study framework utilizing a Pre-test Post-test design arrangement involving a comparative analysis of two elderly clients experiencing stress-related difficulties while receiving nursing care. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of breathing meditation in reducing stress effectively and to explore the importance of nurses in providing a sense of security and comfort for elderly clients facing stress-related problems. Meditation sessions were conducted once a day, five times a week, with a duration of only 15 minutes each time.

Providing structured mindfulness therapy can reduce stress levels in the elderly by increasing self-awareness and emotional regulation skills (Pratama & Sulistyorini, 2023).

Deep breathing relaxation therapy has been proven effective in reducing stress levels in the elderly, especially those living in social care facilities, because it can increase physiological relaxation and reduce psychological tension (Utami et al., 2022).

This research has received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Sumber Waras and is declared to comply with the principles of

research ethics according to applicable standards (ethics approval number: No. 045/EC/STIKes-SW/III/2025)

Results

Table 1. Stress Levels Before and After Giving Breathing Meditation Therapy.

| Test | Client 1 (Mrs.H) | Client 2 (Mrs.S) |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| Pre-Test | 16 (Moderate) | 15 (moderate) |
| Post-Test | 6 (Mild) | 8 (Mild) |

Stress level measurements using the PSS-10 were conducted twice: a pre-test at the beginning of therapy and a post-test at the end of therapy. Mrs. H's pre-test score was 16 points, categorized as moderate stress, and Mrs. S's pre-test score was 15 points, categorized as moderate stress.

After the intervention, which included breathing meditation therapy, changes were also observed in the post-test scores using the PSS-10. Mrs. H's post-test score was 6 points, categorized as mild stress, and Mrs. S's post-test score was 8 points, categorized as mild stress.

Discussion

Discussion 1 (Assessment)

Based on the results of the assessment, it was discovered that both clients experienced similar complaints, such as feelings of sadness and blank stares when talking, frequent crying, and even insomnia. Furthermore, life history and social background were also part of the assessment, as these factors play a role in the level of stress experienced by the elderly. Client Mrs. H stated that she felt her family never visited her and was not encouraged by her family. Client Mrs. S stated that her husband abandoned her and forced her to live alone. Both clients shared the same problem of loneliness, which can exacerbate their stress levels.

These findings align with research conducted by (Putri et al., 2023), which revealed that stress is a condition experienced by everyone, but how each individual expresses and responds to it varies depending on personal factors and the surrounding situation.

Furthermore, these results align with research by (Jiang et al., 2022), which supports this finding with the finding that low levels of social trust and limited interaction significantly contribute to increased stress symptoms among older adults in Asia.

Based on these results, the researchers assume that a holistic approach to assessing older adults is crucial for identifying factors that influence stress levels. Both clients exhibited similar stress symptoms, such as sadness, crying, and sleep disturbances. The primary factor identified was feelings of loneliness due to a lack of social support from family. Client Mrs. H felt neglected by her family, while client Mrs. S felt lost after being abandoned by her partner. In my opinion, these psychosocial aspects play a significant role in exacerbating stress in older adults in social care.

Research conducted by (Nazira et al., 2021), shows that older adults with higher levels of self-awareness generally exhibit reduced anxiety related to death, a form of emotional distress often faced by older adults.

Discussion 2 (Nursing Diagnosis)

Based on the results obtained in determining the nursing diagnosis, it was discovered that this diagnosis arose because both clients complained of feeling sad because their families had left them. This affected the clients' psychological state, characterized by a blank stare and difficulty sleeping. The nursing diagnosis, established using the Indonesian Nursing Diagnosis

Standards (SDKI), was "Disturbed Sense of Comfort Related to Inadequate Resources (Family Support)," with code D.0074.

This finding contradicts the proposed theory, as the assessment results indicated that the primary complaint expressed by the clients was discomfort, both physical and psychological. The theory proposed by (SDKI, 2017) states that disturbed sense of comfort encompasses discomfort in aspects of rest, tranquility, and other subjective feelings. By meeting the clients' need for comfort, it is hoped that symptoms of anxiety and sleep disturbances will gradually decrease. Furthermore, this study aligns with research by (Jenau et al., 2021), which found that breathing meditation can reduce stress in the elderly because it is a form of nursing intervention that relies on calming the mind, body, and spirit, thus creating feelings of relaxation, comfort, freshness, and tantrums. This reduces negative feelings and sadness.

Based on these results, the researcher assumes that the nursing diagnosis of Impaired Sense of Comfort related to inadequate resources (family support), coded D.0074, is appropriate based on the assessment results. Both clients exhibited signs of stress due to lack of family support, such as feelings of sadness, blank stares, and sleep disturbances. I believe this psychological aspect requires attention because it directly impacts the comfort of the elderly. Furthermore, these signs of stress align with the definition of the Diagnosis of Impaired Sense of Comfort, which focuses on client complaints that lead to a loss of comfort and emotional support rather than concerns about threats listed in the Anxiety diagnosis.

Discussion 3 (Intervention)

Based on the results obtained from the intervention, it is known that the researcher developed a nursing plan with the main intervention using relaxation therapy according to the Indonesian Nursing Intervention Standards (SIKI, 2017), namely Relaxation Therapy (I.05258) which is focused on helping the elderly in overcoming the stress they experience at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home. The researcher chose to use breathing meditation therapy intervention as the main approach in this relaxation therapy with the aim of reducing stress levels in the elderly. This will be carried out five times in five days and each session lasts approximately 15 minutes. It is hoped that both clients will experience a decrease in stress levels, reduced feelings of emptiness and sadness, and improved sleep quality.

These findings are in line with studies conducted by (Wulandar & Adzillina, 2024) and (Ginjar et al., 2024), which indicate that deep breathing techniques can substantially reduce stress levels in the elderly and help improve their calmness and mental health. Furthermore, it was revealed that mindfulness practice significantly reduced depression levels in elderly residents in a social care setting, based on pre-test and post-test results with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. This intervention was conducted in a structured manner and demonstrated effectiveness in improving the emotional well-being of the elderly through breathing and self-awareness methods.

Research conducted by (Sari et al., 2022) showed that regular deep breathing relaxation therapy significantly reduced stress levels in the elderly, as indicated by a decrease in stress scores before and after the intervention.

Furthermore, these results align with research by (Jenau et al., 2021), which found that breathing meditation significantly reduced stress in the elderly, with post-test results showing an increase in the number of elderly who were in the normal or non-stressed category. This intervention works by increasing relaxation through regulated breathing and a calm atmosphere, thereby providing peace of mind and inner comfort.

Based on these results, the researchers conclude that breathing meditation therapy is an appropriate intervention for reducing stress in the elderly. This therapy works by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which reduces heart rate, respiratory rate, and levels of stress hormones like cortisol. Furthermore, breathing meditation also increases self-awareness, helps clients manage negative emotions, and improves sleep quality. I applied this therapy for 5 consecutive days, with the first and second days as a trial or introduction phase,

and the third to fifth days as an adaptation phase, each for 15 minutes, with the hope of improving the psychological comfort of the elderly in social care.

Discussion 4 (Implementation)

Based on the results obtained during implementation, it was found that with the right and consistent approach, seniors can demonstrate improvements in their stress management abilities. The success of this therapy is also greatly influenced by the active involvement of the client and a supportive environment. On the first and second days, the client did not show any significant changes, but there were some small, temporary changes due to the trial phase, or the introduction and adaptation phase of breathing meditation therapy. The client still complained of insomnia. This was likely due to the client still adapting to the new relaxation method. However, on the third and fifth days, changes began to gradually become apparent. The client reported being able to sleep soundly during the day and at night. This response indicates that the client is beginning to accept and adapt to the therapy.

Mindfulness-based breathing practices have also been shown to improve relaxation and sleep quality in elderly individuals, supporting the observed improvements during the implementation phase (Dewi et al., 2024).

These findings align with research conducted by (Jenau et al., 2021), which indicates that breathing meditation can relieve stress by activating the parasympathetic nervous system. This activity produces a significant relaxation effect and plays a role in reducing levels of stress hormones like cortisol, contributing to both mental and physical well-being.

Furthermore, these results align with research by (Jenau et al., 2021), which found a difference in stress levels between the first and seventh days. The changes were not immediate, but became more apparent between the third and seventh days, indicating that the elderly experienced calmness, relaxation, and a sense of comfort, resulting in a more restful night's sleep.

Based on these results, the researchers concluded that implementing breathing meditation therapy significantly helps the elderly manage stress non-pharmacologically. This therapy was conducted for five consecutive days, lasting 15 minutes per session, and following a structured relaxation technique. During the first two days, clients did not show significant changes, although they began to appear slightly calmer. This could be interpreted as part of the adaptation process to the new method. However, on the third and fifth days, clients began to show improvement: they reported sleeping better, both day and night, and appeared more emotionally relaxed. In my opinion, these positive responses indicate that clients are becoming accustomed to the breathing meditation technique and are gradually recognizing its benefits. These results reinforce the view that relaxation therapy can be an effective strategy for reducing stress levels and improving the quality of life for the elderly, especially in social care settings.

Discussion 5 (Evaluation)

Based on the evaluation results, it was found that this therapy resulted in changes in stress levels in both clients. They appeared calmer and more peaceful, feelings of sadness and emptiness were reduced, and sleep quality improved.

These findings are supported by research conducted by (Javadzade et al., 2024), which showed that an eight-week MBSR program significantly reduced depression levels, improved emotional regulation, and improved sleep quality in older adults experiencing psychological problems in a nursing home ($p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, the PSS-10 measurement tool showed a decrease in stress levels in both clients. Mrs. H's post-test score was 6 points, categorized as mild stress, while Mrs. H's post-test score was 6 points, categorized as mild stress. S score of 8 points, categorized as mild stress.

These findings align with a study by (Jenau et al., 2021), which stated that assessments of breathing interventions in older adults showed a reduction in stress levels based on pre- and

post-test results, indicating treatment success through shifts in the respondents' mental states.

Furthermore, these results align with research by (Jenau et al., 2021), which found that breathing meditation therapy significantly reduced stress levels in older adults, based on pre- and post-test evaluations. The average stress score decreased from 23.67 to 17.87, and the severe-very severe stress level decreased dramatically after the intervention. The evaluation also showed an improvement in the stress category to mild or even normal in most respondents. This is supported by a statistical test value of $p = 0.000$, indicating that the therapy was significantly effective in helping older adults manage stress.

Based on these results, the researchers concluded that breathing meditation therapy had a positive impact on reducing stress levels in older adults. After five days of intervention, both clients appeared calmer, complaints of sadness and emptiness decreased, and sleep quality improved. The decrease in PSS-10 scores also confirmed this, with post-test results indicating mild stress in both clients. This reinforces the effectiveness of breathing meditation as a non-pharmacological intervention in stress management in the elderly.

Similar findings were reported in studies using other relaxation techniques, such as Benson relaxation, which demonstrated a significant reduction in stress levels among elderly individuals (Wismadi & Sintia, 2022).

(Ahmadi et al., 2023) in their systematic analysis revealed that older adults cope with stress through basic methods such as meditation, relaxation breathing techniques, and social support, which contributed to the success of breathing meditation therapy in this study.

This is also supported by research by (Betan et al., 2024) and an international meta-analysis by (Fincham et al., 2023), which showed that breathing relaxation techniques practiced for 20 minutes daily for a week significantly reduced stress levels in older adults in nursing homes, with pre-PSS-10 scores of 25.26 and post-test scores of 21.20 ($p < 0.001$). In addition, it shows that breathing techniques such as breathwork significantly reduce subjective stress when compared to the group that did not receive intervention, with a statistical test value of Hedges' $g = -0.35$; 95% CI $[-0.55 \text{ to } -0.14]$; $p = 0.0009$. These results confirm the success of breathing methods as a non-pharmacological way to deal with stress, including for the elderly population.

A combination of deep breathing relaxation and progressive muscle relaxation has been demonstrated to significantly reduce anxiety levels among elderly individuals with hypertension, indicating that multi-modal relaxation interventions can be effective in managing psychological stress in older populations (Rakhmawati et al., 2023).

Discussion 6 (Pre- and Post-Intervention Comparison)

Based on the results obtained in this section, it was discovered that both clients exhibited signs of stress, such as feelings of sadness and blank stares when sharing their stories, frequent crying, and even insomnia. The clients' stress levels were categorized as Moderate Stress, based on observations and measurement instruments using the PSS-10. Stress level measurements using the PSS-10 were conducted twice: a pre-test conducted at the beginning of therapy and a post-test conducted at the end of therapy. Ms. H's pre-test score was 16 points, categorizing her as Moderate Stress, and Mrs. S's pre-test score was 15 points, categorizing her as Moderate Stress.

After the intervention, which included five sessions of breathing meditation therapy, each session lasting approximately 15 minutes, the clients' emotional states significantly improved. Stress symptoms decreased, as evidenced by a more peaceful mood and a diminished sense of blank stare. Furthermore, they reported better sleep. The clients also subjectively reported feeling calmer and more comfortable after the therapy. These findings are also supported by research (Hsiung et al., 2023), which found that a breathing meditation program significantly reduced signs of depression and anxiety and improved spiritual well-being in elderly people with disabilities living in nursing homes.

These changes also occurred in post-test results using the PSS-10. Mrs. H's post-test score was 6 points, categorized as mild stress, and Mrs. S's post-test score was 8 points, categorized as mild stress.

These findings align with the concept proposed by (Jenau et al., 2021), which suggests that breathing meditation can reduce stress in elderly people because this method works by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which triggers a calming effect, reduces stress hormones, and improves sleep quality and emotional stability.

Furthermore, these results align with research by (Putri et al., 2023), who found that in their pre-test of 32 clients, 31 clients experienced severe stress (97%) and 1 client experienced moderate stress (3%). However, after three post-tests, stress levels decreased: 1 client experienced mild stress (3%) and 31 clients experienced moderate stress (97%). The significance value ($0.001 < 0.05$) indicates that meditation relaxation therapy has an effect on stress management in the elderly at the Delima Integrated Health Service Post (Posyandu) in the Puri Dampit Permai Housing Complex.

These results are consistent with previous studies showing that deep breathing relaxation significantly reduces stress scores in elderly individuals based on pre- and post-test evaluations (Elliya et al., 2021)

Benson relaxation has been shown to be effective in lowering stress scores among elderly populations, producing relaxation and subjective comfort, and therefore can be considered as a complementary stress reduction technique (Rokhman, 2021).

From these results, the authors conclude that breathing meditation therapy is effective in reducing stress levels in the elderly. The change in PSS-10 scores from moderate to mild stress reinforces the finding that simple techniques such as meditation can have a positive impact on the emotional well-being of the elderly. Furthermore, subjective recognition from clients of feeling calmer and more comfortable further indicates that this therapy is not only numerically effective but also directly felt by the intervention recipients. This intervention is also considered easy to implement, does not require special tools, and is safe for the elderly age group..

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

Assessment

The assessment results showed that both clients experienced stress influenced by feelings of loneliness, abandonment by family, and a lack of emotional support. Mrs. H felt abandoned by her family, while Mrs. S felt lonely because her husband had left her. Complaints such as sadness, a blank stare, frequent crying, and sleep disturbances were clear indications of the level of stress they were experiencing.

Nursing Diagnosis

Based on the results of the nursing assessment of two elderly people at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home, the nursing diagnosis determined refers to the Indonesian Nursing Diagnosis Standards (SDKI, 2017), namely Impaired sense of comfort related to inadequate resources (family support) with code D.0074. This diagnosis arose due to complaints from clients who felt abandoned by their families, thus affecting psychological conditions such as feelings of sadness, empty stares, and sleep disturbances.

Intervention

In this study, the planned nursing intervention refers to the Indonesian Nursing Intervention Standards (SIKI, 2017), namely Relaxation Therapy (I.05258), which is implemented as a primary effort to help the elderly cope with stress. This intervention was chosen because it is relevant to the psychological condition of the elderly who experience a disturbed sense of well-being due to a lack of family support..

Implementation

The implementation of breathing meditation therapy as part of nursing care for elderly people experiencing stress at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Welfare Center showed positive results. The therapy was conducted routinely for five consecutive days, with each session lasting 15 minutes, following a structured procedure that focused on breathing techniques, muscle relaxation, and managing negative thoughts.

Evaluation

Breathing meditation therapy has been proven to address issues of impaired sense of security and comfort by reducing stress levels in the elderly. Based on observations and responses from both clients, it can be concluded that this therapy has a positive impact on reducing stress levels. Clients showed significant emotional changes, such as feelings of calmer and more peaceful, reduced sadness and blank stares, and improved sleep quality. These results are also supported by objective data from the PSS-10 measurement tool, where post-test scores showed a decrease in stress levels in both clients. Mrs. H experienced a decrease in score to 6 points and Mrs. S to 8 points, both of which are included in the mild stress category.

Pre- and Post-Intervention Comparison

A study conducted on two elderly clients facing stress at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home concluded that techniques involving breathing meditation can significantly reduce stress levels in older adults. This was evident in the recorded decrease in stress scores, as assessed by the PSS-10 tool, which shifted from moderate to mild stress after five intervention sessions over several consecutive days. Furthermore, a marked positive transformation was reported by the clients themselves; they expressed a feeling of calm, a reduction in emotional distress such as crying and blank expressions, and an improvement in their sleep quality. A study conducted on two elderly clients facing stress at the Bina Dhaksa Budi Bakti 2 Social Home concluded that techniques involving breathing meditation can significantly reduce stress levels in older adults. This was evident in the recorded decrease in stress scores, as assessed by the PSS-10 tool, which shifted from moderate to mild stress after five intervention sessions over several consecutive days. Furthermore, a marked positive transformation was reported by the clients themselves; they expressed a feeling of calm, a reduction in emotional distress such as crying and blank expressions, and an improvement in their sleep quality.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the author offers several suggestions:

For Clients

It is hoped that this research will increase client knowledge about how to reduce stress through breathing meditation therapy.

For Institutions

It will add the latest reports and data related to managing clients with stress issues, including the use of breathing meditation therapy to reduce stress in the elderly.

For Researchers

It is hoped that authors will utilize the knowledge gained from their life experiences in providing nursing care to clients suffering from stress issues.

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