

# Effectiveness of Play Therapy on Anxiety and Psychosocial Adjustment among Hospitalized Preschool Children

Ahmed Mansoor K.<sup>1</sup>, Rakhi Manjooan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MSc Nursing, Govt College of Nursing, Kottayam

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Govt College of Nursing, Kottayam

**Abstract:** *The present study assessed the anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children in Institute of Child Health, Kottayam. A quantitative research approach with pre testpost test control design was used for the study. The conceptual framework for the study was based on Betty Neuman's system model. Sixty preschool children admitted in medical wards of Institute of Child Health (ICH), Kottayam were selected by purposive sampling, 30 each in control and experimental group. Socio personal data and clinical data sheet, Modified Yale Anxiety Assessment Scale and Structured Psychosocial Adjustment Scale were used for data collection. Pretest was done on the day of admission. Play therapy was given to the experimental group for four consecutive days half an hour daily in the morning and in the evening. Post test was done on the fifth day of admission. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results of the study revealed that majority of hospitalized preschool children had moderate anxiety and psychosocial adjustment and the play therapy had a significant effect in reducing anxiety and promoting psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children. The study also revealed that there was a significant association between anxiety among hospitalized preschool children and selected variables like age and education of preschool children.*

**Keywords:** Play therapy; anxiety; psychosocial adjustment; hospitalized preschool children

## 1. Introduction

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) states that the prevalence of children undergoing hospital care is around 84%.<sup>1</sup> Disease Control, National Hospital Discharge Survey explained that more than 1.6 million children, including 2 - 6 years old undergo hospitalization.<sup>2</sup>

Hospitalization is stressful and threatening experience for children of all ages.<sup>3</sup> Illness and hospitalization cause stress and negative impact among children. Each child perceives illness and hospitalization uniquely.<sup>4</sup> During a serious illness even older children have a great need for their parents and can tolerate their absence only for short periods. Because of unfamiliarity with the environment, medical procedures and unaware of the reason for hospitalization, it can result in uncertainty, anxiety and feeling of helplessness in children. Anxiety level of children is high when compared to adults when they are admitted to hospital.<sup>5</sup>

Psychosocial adjustment of hospitalized children depends on the attention to developmental needs of children in health care planning in hospitals.<sup>6</sup> Play therapy facilitates self-expression and provides a mechanism for increasing psychosocial adjustment. It provides opportunity to regain the common sense of autonomy and mastery.<sup>7</sup> Play is an integral part of the hospitalized child's plan of care. Play offers the child an opportunity for creative expression, diversion and effective coping.<sup>8</sup>

Research studies show that play therapy could effectively improve psychosocial adjustment, reduce anxiety and enhance comfort among them. Play therapy is not given in the wards. Hence the investigator decided to study the

effectiveness of play therapy on anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.

## Objectives

- 1) To assess the level of anxiety among hospitalized preschool children.
- 2) To identify the psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.
- 3) To evaluate the effectiveness of play therapy on anxiety among hospitalized preschool children.
- 4) To evaluate the effectiveness of play therapy on psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.
- 5) To find out the correlation between anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.
- 6) To determine the association of anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children with selected variables.

## 2. Materials and methods

A quantitative approach was used for the study. The study design selected was quasi - experimental pre test post test control group design. Non probability sampling technique was employed to select 60 children between the age group 3 - 6 years admitted with respiratory tract infection admitted in medical wards of a tertiary care hospital according to inclusion criteria. The subjects were grouped into control and experimental groups consisting of 30 subjects each. The purpose of the study was explained and informed consent was obtained from the mothers of the participants in the prescribed format prior to data collection. The confidentiality of the data collected was assured. Basic information of children with respiratory tract infection was

collected using socio personal data and clinical data sheet which was filled by the investigator. Pre test was conducted in the control group and experimental group by using modified Yale anxiety assessment scale and structured psychosocial adjustment scale on the first day of admission within 5 hours of admission.

Play therapy was provided to the 30 children of the experimental group. Play therapy was introduced to the child individually while child sits comfortably with the mother at bedside. Instructions regarding the way to play with all the interventions were provided to the children by the investigator. Play therapy was given in three phases for 30 minutes in the morning and evening. In first phase, the investigator demonstrated the toy medical equipments which included stethoscope, syringe without needle, hot water bag, large sized capsules, gauze, doll and kidney tray. Child played for 10 minutes after the demonstration. In second phase, snake - ladder play was introduced by the investigator and child played for 10 minutes with the investigator. In third phase, coloring book and crayon box were provided to the child individually and child did the coloring for 10 minutes. Four sets of play materials were used and reusable play materials given to the children were disinfected by alcohol swab.

The control group was given routine care. Post test was conducted to measure the anxiety and psychosocial adjustment on 5th day of admission using the same tools for both the groups.

### 3. Results of the Study

#### Socio personal characteristics of hospitalized preschool children

Among the subjects 63.3% of children in the control group and 56.7% of the children in the experimental group belonged to the age group of 3 - 4 years. Data showed that among the subjects 63.3% and 56.7% of children were boys in the control group and experimental group respectively. Majority of children in the control group (70%) and in the experimental group (76.7%) were from nuclear family. The data revealed that 50% of children in the control group and 53.3% of the children in the experimental group were first born. Regarding the education, 40% and 53.3% of children in the control group and experimental group respectively were going to Anganwadi.

#### Clinical characteristics of the hospitalized preschool children

Majority of children in the control group (63.3%) and in the experimental group (73.3%) were suffering from LRTI. Most of the children in the control group (83.3%) and in the experimental group (70%) were having previous hospitalization. Majority of the hospitalized children in the control group (66.7%) and experimental group (60%) had no hospitalizations within last year.

#### Anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children

Majority of children 80% in the control group and 76.7% of children in the experimental group had moderate anxiety. Majority of children 86.7% in the control group and 83.3%

of children in the experimental group had moderate psychosocial adjustment.

#### Effectiveness of play therapy on anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children

Pre test and post test of median of anxiety score in control group were 12.50 and 11.00 respectively. Pre test and post test anxiety scores of hospitalized preschool children in the experimental group were 12.00 and 5.00 respectively. This shows that the post test median of anxiety in experimental group decreased after play therapy. The U value obtained was significant at 0.001 level and hence it was concluded that the play therapy had significant effect in reducing the anxiety among hospitalized preschool children.

#### Mean rank, Sum of ranks and Mann Whitney U value of anxiety among hospitalized preschool children in control and experimental group, n=60

Group	Anxiety		U
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	
Control (n=30)	45.4	1362	3.00***
Experimental (n=30)	15.6	468	

\*\*\*Significant at 0.001 level

Table shows that U value obtained for anxiety score of hospitalized preschool children in the control and experimental group was 3.00 which was significant at 0.001 level. So the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence it is inferred that play therapy was effective in reducing anxiety among hospitalized preschool children.

Median of the pre test and post test psychosocial adjustment scores of hospitalized preschool children in the control group were 10.00 and 9.00 respectively and the median of the pre test and post test psychosocial adjustment scores of children in the experimental group were 10.00 and 5.00 respectively. This shows that median of psychosocial adjustment in the experimental group decreased after play therapy. The U value obtained was significant at 0.001 level and hence it was concluded that the play therapy had a significant effect in improving the psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.

#### Mean rank, Sum of ranks and Mann Whitney U value of psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children in control and experimental group, n=60

Group	Psychosocial adjustment		U
	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	
Control (n=30)	45.5	1365	0.00***
Experimental (n=30)	15.5	465	

\*\*\*Significant at 0.001 level.

Table shows that U value obtained was 0.00 which is significant at 0.001 level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it is inferred that play therapy was effective in improving psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.

#### Correlation between anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children

There was no correlation between anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children.

### Association of anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children with selected variables

There was statistically significant association between anxiety among hospitalized preschool children and age and education of the child. There was no statistically significant association between anxiety among hospitalized preschool children and variables such as gender, type of family, birth order, diagnosis, previous hospitalization and number of hospitalization within last year. There was no statistically significant association between psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children and variables such as age, gender, type of family, birth order, education, diagnosis, previous hospitalization and number of hospitalization within last year.

### 4. Discussion

The present study evaluated the effectiveness of play therapy on anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children. The results of the study depicted that there was a significant difference in the anxiety scores between control and experimental group and the play therapy had a positive effect on anxiety among hospitalized preschool children. The finding of the study was supported by previous literature. The study result was consistent with the findings of a study conducted to assess the effectiveness of therapeutic play on the level of anxiety among hospitalized children between 3 - 6 years in Stanley Hospital, Chennai. The analysis revealed that there was significant decrease in the post test level of anxiety among hospitalized children between 3 - 6 years in experimental group.<sup>9</sup>

The study result was consistent with the findings of another study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of therapeutic play of hospitalized children with cancer in Hong Kong. The results showed that therapeutic play was effective in reducing stress in hospitalized children.<sup>10</sup>

### 5. Conclusion

The study on effectiveness of play therapy on anxiety and psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children in Institute of Child Health, Kottayam was a successful research work by the investigator. Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn. There was a significant reduction in the anxiety and improvement in the psychosocial adjustment among hospitalized preschool children with play therapy. The present study highlighted the need for providing play therapy to reduce the anxiety and improve the psychosocial adjustment in hospitalized children.

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