

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF ART THERAPY TO REDUCE ANXIETY IN NEW STUDENTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

Hadifa Fifi Anggraini<sup>1</sup>  
Universitas Negeri Semarang  
[hafida.fa27@gmail.com](mailto:hafida.fa27@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** Education is one of the important aspects that must be carried out by every human being from an early age. However, in the education process, there are so many obstacles that will be passed by a person, one of which is anxiety. The method used in this research is qualitative. The method used in this study consists of two stages, namely the data collection stage and the data analysis stage. The conclusion is that elementary school children who have just entered school experience anxiety because of several things such as not knowing or fearing plunging into a new environment, bad experiences that have occurred in the past, and excessive fear of an object or person, one of them namely the existence of teachers. Art Therapy is a solution to overcome excessive anxiety experienced by students.

**Keywords:** A Systematic Literature Review, Art Therapy, Anxiety, Students

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Education is one of the important aspects that must be carried out by every human being from an early age. Education can develop the economy and society of a country. Therefore, education is a pillar of the development of a nation. Education provides knowledge and skills to children, and shapes the personality of the nation's children. Education is very important for a child's success in life. This can have a major impact on the opportunities for people in Indonesia to continue their quality of life (Manurung, 2012). Education is generally seen as the foundation of society that brings economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability. Economic and social status depends on the education obtained by the individual. Because education contributes to an

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<sup>1</sup> Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia, [hafida.fa27@gmail.com](mailto:hafida.fa27@gmail.com)

individual's ability to regulate the quality of life. This can help individuals to escape from poverty, build harmony and democracy in society.

Education is also able to give them the power to speak out about their views, expose their true potential, lead them to become better people and broaden their views for sure. Education is the key to moving in the world, finding a better job, and finally succeeding in life. Education is the best investment for children because educated people have more opportunities to find jobs that give them satisfaction. Education in society prepares children to become adults and can shape the next generation of leaders.

However, in the education process, there are so many obstacles that will be passed by someone, especially children, one of which is environmental change. These environmental changes sometimes trigger excessive stress on children, especially elementary school children who have just entered an environment. Excessive anxiety that arises in elementary school students can cause losses in the process of children's education, one of which is that a child is not optimal in capturing existing learning. Therefore, it is necessary to have therapy that can reduce or minimize or even eliminate anxiety that occurs in new children in elementary school.

### **Anxiety Disorder**

Anxiety disorders are disorders with an 'abnormal' experience of fear, leading to ongoing distress and/or impairment in social functioning (Hassink-Franke, Heest, Hekman, Marwijk, & Avendonk, 2012). Among these disorders are panic disorder, social phobia, agoraphobia, specific phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Anxiety disorders rank high on the list of disease burdens. According to the Global Burden of Disease study (Baxter, Vos, Scott, Ferrari, & Whiteford, 2014), anxiety disorders were the sixth leading cause of disability, in terms of years of life with disability (YLD), in low, middle and high income countries in 2010. These disorders lead to reduced quality of life (Mendlowicz, 2000) and functional disorders, not only in personal life but also in the workplace or other environments (Naragon-Gainey, Gallagher, & Brown, 2013). The environmental displacement experienced by elementary school children is a period full of change, both psychological and environmental development (Hassink-Franke, Heest, Hekman, Marwijk, & Avendonk, 2012). Changes in these experiences can cause stress. One of these changes can cause stress in children. Stress among students that arises during the learning process can affect

students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor development (Kessler, Chiu, Demler, & Walters, 2005).

### **Art Therapy**

To increase the effectiveness of the treatment of anxiety disorders, adjunct therapies are used in clinical practice. An example is Art-Therapy (AT), which is integrated into some mental health care programs for people with anxiety and is also provided as a stand-alone therapy. AT is considered an important supportive intervention in mental illness, but clarity about the effectiveness of AT is currently lacking. AT media can use fine arts, such as painting, drawing, sculpting, and making clay models. The focus is on the process of creating and experiencing it, which aims to facilitate the expression of memories, feelings and emotions, the enhancement of self-reflection and the development and practice of new coping skills (Malchiodi, 2003).

AT is believed to support children with anxiety in managing their symptoms and improving their quality of life. Based on long-term experience with anxiety treatment in practice, AT experts explain that AT can improve emotion regulation and self-structuring skills and can increase self-awareness and reflective abilities. Patients experience more direct and easier access to their emotions through art therapy, compared to verbal approaches (Haeyen, Hooren, & Hutschemaekers, 2015). As a result of this experience, AT is believed to reduce symptoms in patients who experience anxiety.

Although AT is often indicated in anxiety, its effectiveness has not been widely studied. In the last decade several systematic reviews of AT were published. This review covers several areas. Some reviews focus on PTSD, or have a broader focus and cover multiple (mental) health conditions (Uttley, Stevenson, Scope, Radwin, & Sutton, 2015). Other reviews include AT in the broader definition of psychodynamic therapy (Fonagy, 2015) or dealing with multiple expressive arts therapies (guided imagery and music therapy), exposure therapy (eg, systematic desensitization) and pharmacological treatments within a single treatment program.

### **METHOD**

Methodology comes from two basic words, namely method which means how to do something systematically and logic which means science based on logical thinking. So it can be concluded that the methodology is a very important element in conducting a research.

### **Respondent or Sample**

In conducting this study, the respondents used in this study were children who were sitting in elementary school. In addition to the above requirements, to find out the specifications or narrow the discussion, this study used respondents or samples in the form of elementary school children who had just moved schools or commonly referred to as new children.

### **Procedure and Data Analysis**

This study uses a method in the form of a systematic literature review. Systematic literature review (SLR) is identifying, selecting, and critically assessing research to answer clearly formulated questions (Dewey, A. & Drahota, A. 2016). Systematic reviews are conducted following a clearly defined protocol or plan in which the criteria are clearly stated prior to the review. The researcher conducted a comprehensive and transparent search conducted on several databases and literature that could be replicated and reproduced. Research involves planning a well thought out search strategy that has a specific focus or answers a defined question. Then, the review identifies the types of information sought, critiqued, and reported within a known timeframe. Search terms, search strategies (including database name, platform, search date) and restrictions should all be included in the review.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Table 1**  
**Division of Journals**

<b>No</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Journal</b>
<b>1.</b>	Art Therapy	8 Journals
<b>2.</b>	Anxiety	7 Journals
<b>3.</b>	Students	4 Journals

### **Art Therapy**

Art therapy is based on the idea that the creative process of making art is healing and life enhancing and is a form of nonverbal communication of thoughts and feelings pikiran (Malchiodi, 2003). Art therapy is based on the theory that early trauma or developmental conflicts may not be accessible through verbal language but rather are stored in the subconscious in the form of pre-verbal sensory, kinesthetic or imaginary cognitions and associated emotional experiences represented in symbolic language (Wadson, 2010). The

process of accessing preverbal ways of knowing and experiencing requires deliberate development through a therapeutic relationship or living environment that reflects the client's pre-verbal awareness. Using emotional presence, art therapists select relevant artistic processes to reflect children's emotional states in relational states and consequently foster the emergence of metaphorical and symbolic language that reconstructs their personal narratives. (Gerber, 2014). Study results show that long-term individual art therapy is effective in promoting cognitive and emotional development, enabling relationships and reducing destructive behavior in children (Dudley, 2014).

Nonverbal communication is the most basic form of communication and it is how the caregiver and baby initially connect in the first years of life (Schore, 2003). Since thoughts and feelings are not strictly verbal and are not limited to storage as verbal language in the brain, art therapy is very useful in helping individuals communicate their stories that may not be available through words. For some individuals, conveying a memory or story through artistic modalities is more tolerable than verbalization. If all meanings could be adequately expressed using words, painting and music would not exist. When it comes to emotions, art forms of transferring our internal messages are more authentic, yet diverse, than verbal means (Dewey, 1934).

The fine arts philosopher Langer referred to the internal world as feelings and argued that art forms are designed to convey feelings to others (Langer, 1942). According to him, the art form consists of visual, structural elements of a work of art such as color, line, composition, etc (Langer, 1942). Langer believed that artistic form could be used to represent internal feelings structurally. Art therapy and other healing practices that incorporate creative expression are extremely important and useful, especially in situations where speaking or writing is not possible, or conducive to healing. A young child or person with a disability may not be able to speak or have an adequate vocabulary. A victim of a crime may find security by using creative expression as a means of self-protection (Henderson, 2007).

There are several important interpretations of how art can be used in the therapeutic process. This shows that in the broadest interpretation, the use of art therapy in visual material is related to several attempts to assist the integration or reintegration of personality. Various forms of art therapy seem to emerge for the most part when it is practiced. For example, art in clinical settings has generated psychoanalytic applications, whereas art in educational settings has

resulted in an emphasis on integrating cognitive and emotional processes to enhance development, motivation, behavior, and learning.

In addition, art therapy uses knowledge of a child's developmental stages to assess the psychological and normative development of a child or adult to develop an art therapy treatment plan. It involves sensitivity to a child's psychosocial development and efforts to identify conflicts and problems, cognitive, emotional and behavioral that can prevent progressive development (Gerber, 2014). In art, even the child may have what is called a "peak experience," or may feel heightened awareness and excitement.

### **Anxiety Disorders in New Students**

School is one of the educational facilities and infrastructure as a way of perfecting the spiritual and physical development of children. Events that start at school are a step forward in a child's life. The event can be an astonishingly stressful event, unfamiliar to the child or frightening (Sukadji, 2020). Anxiety disorders are the most common and often occur. It includes the same group of conditions with extreme or pathological anxiety as mood or emotional disorders. Anxiety, which can be understood as the pathological counterpart of normal fear, is manifested by mood disturbances, as thought, behavior, and physiological activity. Anxiety disorders include panic disorder (with and without a history of agoraphobia), agoraphobia (with and without a history of panic disorder), generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobia, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, stress disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Psychological distress is a growing problem in school children, both in terms of prevalence and severity.

So that we can know how someone's attitude towards something, Ruseffendi (1992) suggests that the components of attitudes that need to be measured are self-confidence in the learning process and anxiety in the learning process. The definition of anxiety according to Burhanudin (2005), says that anxiety is an overflow of emotions that become one. This anxiety occurs when a person is facing something that suppresses feelings and causes inner conflict within him. Meanwhile, according to Safaria Triantoro (2009) said that, anxiety is an unpleasant emotion, which is characterized by terms such as worry, concern and fear that sometimes we experience in different levels. Anxiety disorders according to Atkinson (2001), anxiety in the form of common physical complaints include not being able to calm down, disturbed sleep, fatigue, various kinds of headaches, dizziness, and heart palpitations. problems that may

occur and it is very difficult to concentrate or make decisions. If the individual finally makes a decision, this will result in further worry. People who suffer from anxiety experience panic attacks, which are sudden states of intense worry or terror. The definitions above emphasize that the cause of anxiety is something that is not clear or something that someone is worried about is something that should not cause that person to be anxious. Student anxiety in dealing with lessons can be interpreted as an unpleasant emotional state of students, which is characterized by anxiety, discomfort, worry, unfounded fear that undesirable things will happen when students face lessons.

In a study conducted by Nazwa Manurung on several research subjects, it was found that the first subject experienced school refusal due to the subject's anxiety or discomfort due to being in a new environment. In addition to these reasons, another reason that makes the child experience anxiety is the previous experience he has experienced, namely bad things have happened to the main subject, so that the child experiences anxiety when entering a new school environment. (Manurung, 2012). In the second research subject, Nazwa Manurung found that the child experienced excessive anxiety at the beginning of elementary school due to the student's fear of the existing teachers. Several steps are taken to minimize or reduce this anxiety, one of which is releasing the children gradually.

Basically, there are several things to note about the anxiety that arises in a child when starting elementary school. Parents should better understand the condition of their students or children so that there is no excessive stress or anxiety. Basically, age alone is not enough to determine a child's readiness to enter elementary school and meet a new environment. The maturity of other things that must be considered, among others, consists of four aspects which include physical, moral, intellectual, and social aspects. (Mubin & Ani, 2006).

### **Application of Art Therapy to Overcome Anxiety**

Art therapy has been shown to significantly help individuals struggling with anxiety. Understanding art therapy and the research around it shows that this additional treatment option has helped people of all ages and backgrounds. Art therapy works to cure anxiety by helping a person feel calm, express themselves, and become more self-aware. As part of a comprehensive treatment plan, art therapy may be a truly transformative treatment option for those seeking healing from an anxiety disorder. Art therapy has potential and benefits for humans. According to the American Art Therapy Association, art therapy

practice helps foster self-esteem and self-awareness, foster emotional resilience, increase insight, and reduce and resolve conflict and distress. However, this particular treatment has also been studied and shown to specifically help those dealing with anxiety disorders.

The term expressive arts refers to a combination of dance, writing, visual arts, drama, music or other creative outlets. Expressive arts therapy uses these modalities and uses them to promote individual development and growth. The right mix can improve overall well-being and contribute to lowering anxiety and stress, increasing self-awareness and self-esteem, strengthening relationships, regulating behavior, and advancing social skills. This type of therapy has also been shown to help children and adults deal with negative situations, disability, and trauma. Through rehabilitation, education, and communication, art therapy helps individuals let go and express feelings they may not know how to let go.

KKN students from UNY located in Sareyan Hamlet, Karangtalun Village, Imogiri District, Bantul Regency formed a work program aimed at children. One of the activities carried out is drawing, where children are asked to draw freely according to what they want and feel using markers and paper media. The use of markers in these activities is intended to select colors that can reflect the feelings of children when drawing. This is also considered because in the therapeutic process in art therapy, not only from the results of the image but also from the selection of colors used. With art therapy, children can better express themselves and express their feelings through art. Other than that, (Syadah, 2018).

In addition to reducing the anxiety experienced by elementary school students, Art Therapy is also a solution in increasing emotional intelligence in elementary school students (Mahardika). Elementary school children need to get a space for expression so that they can pour out and express their emotions in a work of art that they create. Thus the assistance and guidance from a teacher or psychologist will be able to direct and motivate students to have skills in managing emotions. Children of all ages, whether disabled or not, may not yet have the language skills to express themselves, but they do have a voice. Expressive art awakens a child's imagination and creativity to help him discover who he is and how to engage his senses. They also bring a sense of calm to the body and have a positive impact on thought patterns, environmental interpretations and emotional states. Pouring their feelings into poetry, songs, and paintings provides children with a safe outlet for negative emotions through fun activities, which accelerate the healing and growth process. But expressive



arts are not only for coping, they also have a great effect on the normal development of the child.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that elementary school children who have just entered school experience anxiety because of several things such as not knowing or being afraid to enter a new environment, bad experiences that have happened in the past, and excessive fear of an object or people, one of which is the presence of teachers. Art Therapy is one solution to overcome excessive anxiety experienced by students. With Art Therapy students can voice or express their feelings in a work of art that they create. In addition, Art Therapy can make children relax and feel happy and not experience anxiety and tension in the learning process.

Research on the use of Art Therapy for new students in elementary schools is still very minimal. Some journals only discuss Art Therapy for elementary school students, but do not discuss the new environmental conditions that are being experienced by these students. Therefore, in the future, the author hopes that there will be more studies that discuss the role of Art Therapy in reducing anxiety in new students.

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