



ART THERAPY TO REDUCE ANXIETY LEVELS IN CHILDREN VICTIMS OF FLASH FLOODS

Triyono^{1*}, Fitria Kasih², Rahmi Dwi Febriani³, Erfan Abdurrazag⁴, Cindy Fathonah⁵

¹²⁴⁵Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat

³Universitas Negeri Padang

*E-mail: triyono@upgrisba.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The flash flood that occurred in Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra on Saturday, May 11, 2024, has caused major damage and significant loss of life. This flood was triggered by very high rainfall, and several areas were severely affected by a mixture of air flooding and volcanic ash from Mount Marapi. Psychological disorders due to the impact of the disaster on children will have an impact on the child's subsequent development. So this condition needs serious attention to handle and restore the trauma that occurs in children. The problems that occur in children are psychological mental health problems, such as; anxiety problems (anxiety), stress (pressure), depression (depression), and trauma. The implementation of PKM in Nagari Rambatan Tanah Datar is carried out with participatory and collaborative principles. First, provide an explanation with a lecture method through storytelling using simple and easy-to-understand language. Provide Art Therapy (coloring and singing) to children in Nagari Rambatan Tanah Datar. Art Therapy is provided in 2 sessions or 2 stages. The first session is coloring and session 2 is singing. The results of the PKM children have accepted and are grateful for the conditions they are experiencing, the children have accepted the situation. However, there are still children who are still afraid to return home because they are still on alert. The level of anxiety in children has decreased, children feel happy and happy in participating in PKM activities. Children are also enthusiastic in participating in each session. Such as children telling about events and their feelings after the Galodo disaster or flash flood.

Keywords: trauma healing, art therapy, anxiety

ABSTRAK

Banjir bandang yang terjadi di Kabupaten Tanah Datar, Sumatera Barat pada Sabtu, 11 Mei 2024, telah menyebabkan kerusakan besar dan korban jiwa yang signifikan. Banjir ini dipicu oleh curah hujan yang sangat tinggi, dan beberapa daerah terdampak parah oleh campuran air banjir dan abu vulkanik dari Gunung Marapi. Gangguan psikologis dampak bencana yang terjadi pada anak akan berdampak terhadap perkembangan anak selanjutnya. Sehingga kondisi ini perlu mendapatkan perhatian yang serius untuk menangani dan memulihkan kondisi trauma yang terjadi pada anak-anak. Permasalahan yang terjadi pada anak-anak yaitu masalah kesehatan mental psikologis, seperti; masalah ansietas (kecemasan), stress (tekanan), depresi (kemurungan), dan trauma. Pelaksanaan PKM di Nagari Rambatan Tanah Datar dilaksanakan dengan prinsip partisipatif dan Kolaboratif. Pertama memberikan penjelasan dengan metode ceramah melalui bercerita dengan menggunakan bahasa yang sederhana mudah dipahami. Melakukan pemberian Art Therapy (mewarnai dan bernyanyi) pada anak-anak di Nagari Rambatan Tanah Datar. Pemberian Art Therapy dalam 2 sesi atau 2 tahap. sesi pertama adalah mewarnai dan sesi 2 adalah bernyanyi. Hasil PKM anak sudah menerima dan bersyukur dengan kondisi yang dialami, anak sudah menerima keadaan. Namun masih ada anak yang masih merasa takut untuk kembali kerumah dikarenakan masih dalam kondisi siaga. Berkurangnya Tingkat kecemasan anak, anak merasa senang, dan Bahagia dalam mengikuti kegiatan PKM. Anak juga antusias dalam mengikuti setiap sesi. Seperti anak menceritakan tentang kejadian dan perasaannya setelah terjadi bencana galodo atau banjir bandang.

Kata kunci: trauma healing, art therapy, kecemasan

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is located along the equator at a crossroads between two continents and two oceans. It is situated in a region with geographical, geological, hydrological, and demographic conditions prone to frequent disasters (Andayani, H., & Ishak, S., 2020). The country lies on a continental plate adorned with a series of very active volcanoes, commonly referred to as the "Ring



of Fire" (Latif, K., 2020). While such natural conditions make Indonesia vulnerable to various disasters, their adverse impacts can still be mitigated.

Law No. 24 of 2007 defines disasters as a series of events that disrupt and threaten the lives and livelihoods of communities, caused by natural, non-natural, or human factors, which may result in human casualties, environmental damage, loss of property, and psychological impacts. Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone countries, facing threats from natural disasters, non-natural disasters, and human-induced damage. Common disasters include earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, landslides, flash floods, droughts, fires, tornadoes, storms, and others.

The Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) Pasaman Station recorded continuous aftershocks in Pasaman and West Pasaman Regencies. These earthquakes resulted in 38 fatalities and hundreds of injuries. Beyond the loss of life, the disaster also caused damage to homes, schools, places of worship, offices, and other public facilities.

Amriana, A., & Munir, M. (2018) stated that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a disorder experienced by individuals after disasters. PTSD can be addressed if detected and treated promptly. However, if left undiagnosed or untreated for an extended period, it may lead to severe and permanent medical or psychological complications, ultimately affecting social and occupational life (Widha, L., & Aulia, A.R., 2019). Psychological disorders caused by disasters can have long-term effects on children's development (Mashar, R., 2015).

Given the above conditions, urgent attention is required to address and rehabilitate the trauma experienced by children affected by the earthquakes in Pasaman Regency. The trauma manifests as fear, anxiety, and other psychological issues. Preliminary observations in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar, revealed significant structural damage, including collapsed buildings (houses) in several locations. Additionally, children of school age exhibited noticeable trauma.

The flash floods in Tanah Datar have caused significant psychological impacts on victims. Common psychological effects include:

- **Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Victims, particularly those who lost family members, homes, or possessions, often experience profound trauma. PTSD symptoms may include nightmares, flashbacks, and severe anxiety.
- **Anxiety and Depression:** Many victims suffer from heightened anxiety and feelings of hopelessness or helplessness. Loss of homes and livelihoods often leads to depression, exacerbated by uncertainties about the future.
- **Acute Stress and Mental Health Issues:** In the short term, victims may experience acute stress characterized by sleep disturbances, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. These issues can impair decision-making abilities in crises. Children and adolescents, in particular, are highly vulnerable to mental health disorders due to their limited understanding of events, leaving them scared and confused.

Thoyibah, Z., Dwidiyanti, M., Mulianingsih, M., Nurmayani, W., & Wiguna, R.I. (2019) highlighted that disasters disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, particularly children. Due to their immature psychological development, children directly experience, feel, and witness the impacts of disasters. Research in Taiwan revealed that six weeks after an earthquake, 21.7% of 323 students showed post-traumatic stress symptoms, primarily due to physical injuries or the loss of family members (Thoyibah, Z., et al., 2019).

Interviews with community leaders in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar, revealed that residents felt traumatized and fearful due to the recent earthquakes, particularly children. Schools remain closed, and children are still living in tents provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Pasaman Regency Government through the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). Children exhibit trauma symptoms such as startling easily, trembling, crying, and screaming during tremors. Despite receiving material aid such as food and clothing, psychological support for trauma relief is still lacking. Methods such as singing, drawing, storytelling, playing games, and coloring have been used to alleviate children's trauma.



Psychological support, particularly through trauma-healing activities using Art Therapy, is essential to help children recover. Activities like drawing, singing, storytelling, and playing games can reduce anxiety and fear. Trauma-healing programs need to be conducted to minimize issues such as anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma in children affected by the disaster.

The mental health problems experienced by children include anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma (Thoyibah, Z., et al., 2019). Children affected by flash floods often express fear of returning home and suffer from sleep disturbances such as nightmares. Other issues observed in child victims include behavioral changes, such as becoming more sensitive, prone to crying, or easily angered. They panic and cry upon hearing loud noises, and some withdraw and become less cheerful. These symptoms may develop into clinical anxiety and PTSD.

Proposed Solutions:

1. **Provide Clear Explanations:** Educate children about the disaster in simple language they can understand. This will help them comprehend what happened and cope with their emotions.
2. **Implement Art Therapy Activities:** Trauma-healing efforts should include activities such as drawing, singing, storytelling, and playing games to help children recover emotionally. These activities can alleviate anxiety, enabling children to regain their sense of joy and reduce fear.

Ultimately, trauma-healing programs for children can address psychological issues such as anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma, promoting recovery and improving their overall well-being.

METHODS

The implementation of the PKM program in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar, was carried out using participatory and collaborative principles. First, explanations were given using a storytelling lecture method, employing simple and easily understood language. Art Therapy sessions (coloring and singing) were conducted for children in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar. The Art Therapy activities were divided into two sessions: the first session focused on coloring, and the second on singing. The program was implemented in March, involving approximately 30 children from Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar.

Table 1. Achievements and Methods for Attaining Goals

Achievement	Methods and Activities	Indicators of Achievement
Children understand and are aware of the situation.	Providing explanations using a storytelling lecture method with simple, child-friendly language.	Children accept and feel grateful for their circumstances.
Reduced anxiety among children.	Conducting Art Therapy (coloring and singing) for the children in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar. The therapy is delivered in two sessions: the first is coloring, and the second is singing.	Reduction in anxiety levels, indicated by children feeling happy and enthusiastic during the Art Therapy sessions.

Table 1 highlights the achievements and methods used in the PKM program, addressing the fundamental problems faced by the community partner. To achieve these goals, the PKM team is supported by expertise and experience in empowerment and research in this field. Below is the team composition and their contributions:

Table 2. Team Expertise and Contributions to PKM

No	Name	Experience	Contribution to PKM
1	Triyono, M.Pd	Master's in Guidance and Counseling, focusing on IT, BK Media, and Psychological Assessment. Expertise in using art therapy for trauma healing. Teaches courses in Psychological Assessment, Non-Test	Acts as the lead coordinator of PKM and facilitator for trauma healing activities using art therapy.

No	Name	Experience	Contribution to PKM
		Techniques, IT and BK Media, and Educational Professions.	
2	Dra. Fitria Kasih, M.Pd., Kons	Master's in Guidance and Counseling, specializing in BK Management and Counseling Techniques. Teaches courses in BK Management and Counseling Techniques.	Member of the trauma healing program, focusing on development-based tasks and behavioral analysis.
3	Rahmi Dwi Febriani, M.Pd	Master's in Guidance and Counseling, specializing in BK.	Member of the trauma healing program, focusing on development-based tasks and behavioral analysis.
4	Cindy Fathonah	Counseling student who has completed a course in Traumatic Counseling.	Assists faculty members in trauma healing activities.
5	Erfan Abdurrazag	Counseling student who has completed a course in Traumatic Counseling.	Assists faculty members in trauma healing activities.

Based on Table 2, it can be concluded that the PKM team serves as facilitators and is responsible for the successful implementation of the PKM program.

The PKM program consists of three stages: (1) the planning stage, (2) the implementation stage, and (3) the evaluation stage.

1. **Planning Stage:** Identifying the activity location and conducting an initial study to analyze the issues or needs in Nagari Rambatan, Tanah Datar.
2. **Implementation Stage:** Conducting Trauma Healing activities through Art Therapy (coloring and singing).
3. **Evaluation Stage:** Observing children's behavior after the activities are conducted.

This method will be applied throughout all stages of the program to ensure the achievement of the PKM objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the evaluation results, it can be concluded that the PKM activities were carried out as planned and successfully helped reduce anxiety levels. The success of the PKM program was measured by the children's enthusiasm in participating in the Art Therapy sessions from the beginning to the end. Below is an overview of the implementation results by the PKM team:

Table 3. Methods, Achievements, and Indicators of Success

No	Methods and Achievements	Indicators of Success
1	Providing explanations to children using a storytelling lecture method with simple and easy-to-understand language.	Children have accepted and are grateful for their current circumstances. However, some children still feel afraid to return home as the area remains on alert.
2	Conducting Art Therapy (coloring and singing) for children in Nagari Rambatan in two sessions: the first focused on coloring, and the second on singing.	Reduced anxiety levels among children, with children feeling happy and enjoying the PKM activities. They were enthusiastic in every session, even sharing stories and feelings about the flash flood disaster.

Based on these results, the team believes that the PKM program is essential for helping disaster victims, as the issues they face are complex, involving not only physical but also emotional and psychological challenges, particularly among children.

The most significant aspect of the program is the transformation of the psychological condition of child disaster victims. Initially, the children felt sad, anxious, and uncomfortable. Through the program, this state was shifted to one of joy, gratitude, and happiness.



Figure 1. Activity Documentation

Based on these findings, the team believes that the implemented PKM program represents an innovative approach that can be further developed in subsequent stages. The key aspect of this effort is the transformation of the psychological condition of children affected by the flash flood—from feelings of sadness, trauma, and discomfort to a state of joy and adaptability to their current situation. This indicates that trauma healing activities using the art therapy method effectively reduce anxiety in flood victims. According to Dewi, G. A. N. T., & Meiyutariningsih, T. (2021), art therapy is utilized to alleviate anxiety.

Disasters, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are extreme events in natural or human environments that cause damage and impact human lives, property, or activities to a degree that results in a disaster. Consequently, psychological recovery and trauma healing after such events become easier to achieve (Muhammad Yofian, 2008). In this context, the trauma healing team focuses on art-based therapies such as drawing, dancing, singing, and engaging in enjoyable games.

The success of this PKM activity cannot be separated from the support of various stakeholders, including village leaders, the community, institutions, and research organizations involved in the program.

The Community Partnership Program (PKM) aims to explore various participatory technologies. In community assistance efforts, the ultimate goal is to drive positive change. Encouraging such changes requires effective participatory methods or technologies tailored to the specific context of the community and the targeted area. Documentation of the program's implementation will serve as valuable learning material for developing course materials in ICT and Media for Counseling as well as community participation technology.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from this PKM activity are as follows: First, the children have started to accept and feel grateful for their current situation, showing acceptance of their circumstances. However, some children still feel afraid to return home due to the ongoing state of alert. Second, the children's anxiety levels have decreased. They feel happy and enthusiastic while participating in the PKM activities. The children showed excitement during each session, even sharing stories about the events and their emotions after the flash flood or landslide disaster.

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