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Combining zikr and nursing interventions to manage hallucinations in patients with schizophrenia experiencing sensory perception disorders

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Abstract
This case study explores the application of psycho-religious therapy, specifically the practice of zikr (Islamic chanting or remembrance of God), as a complementary intervention for managing hallucinations in schizophrenic patients with sensory perception disorders at Soerojo Hospital Magelang, Indonesia. The intervention was conducted on three patients diagnosed with schizophrenia who frequently experienced auditory and visual hallucinations, impacting their ability to function socially and emotionally. Through a structured schedule of the intervention all three patients demonstrated notable clinical improvements, including a reduction in both major and minor symptoms. The findings suggest that integrating spiritual practices like zikr into psychiatric care not only respects patients' religious values but may also serve as an effective tool to support traditional medical treatments, particularly in culturally and religiously devout populations.

Keywords: Hospital care, Islamic intervention, mental health nurses, psycho-religious therapy, zikr

Introduction

Schizophrenia affects around 24 million individuals globally, equating to roughly 1 in 300 people (0.32%), with a higher prevalence among adults—approximately 1 in 222 (0.45%) (Institute of health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2019). Although less common than many other mental health conditions, schizophrenia typically emerges in late adolescence or early adulthood, with men generally experiencing onset earlier than women (Gogtay et al., 2011; Moniem & Kafetzopoulos, 2025). This disorder often leads to substantial challenges in various aspects of life, including personal relationships, family dynamics, social interactions, education, and employment (Høier et al., 2024). The impact can be deeply distressing and significantly impair daily functioning (WHO, 2022). Individuals living with schizophrenia have a mortality rate two to three times higher than the general population, primarily due to physical health issues such as heart disease, metabolic disorders, and infections (Correll et al., 2022). In addition to health complications, people with schizophrenia frequently face violations of their human rights, both within psychiatric institutions and in community settings. Stigma surrounding the condition remains widespread, leading to social isolation and strained relationships with family and peers. This discrimination can also limit access to essential services like healthcare, education, housing, and job opportunities. In times of crisis—such as public health emergencies or humanitarian disasters—people with schizophrenia are particularly at risk. Stress, fear, the breakdown of support systems, and disruptions in healthcare and medication supplies can worsen their symptoms. These circumstances also heighten their vulnerability to neglect, homelessness, abuse, and exclusion from community support (WHO, 2022).

According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI), Yogyakarta (DIY) has the highest prevalence of households with family members experiencing symptoms of psychosis or schizophrenia, with 9.3% of households reporting symptoms and 7.8% having members officially diagnosed by a doctor. Central Java ranks second, with a prevalence of 6.5% for households reporting symptoms and 5.9% for confirmed diagnoses (Kemenkes, 2023). Psycho-religious therapy using zikr is an approach that aims to create inner balance through repetitive religious chanting, fostering a calm atmosphere and positive emotional responses (Pohan et al., 2024). This can help the central nervous system and endocrine system function more optimally. In patients with schizophrenia, zikr serves as a form of positive distraction, redirecting their attention away from dominating hallucinations and toward a more peaceful mental state. Research has shown that psycho-religious therapy with zikr can help improve patients' ability to control auditory hallucinations (Irawati et al., 2023). A study found that the therapy was effective in reducing symptoms, and it can be considered a complementary intervention for individuals suffering from hallucinations. This study is important because it explores the potential benefits of combining zikr (a spiritual practice) with nursing interventions to manage hallucinations in patients with schizophrenia. Investigating this combined approach can provide a care for patients.

The study's objective is to determine the effectiveness of combining zikr and nursing interventions in reducing hallucinations and improving symptoms in patients with schizophrenia experiencing sensory perception disorders. The finding of the case study has the potential to inform the development of innovative and evidence-based interventions that address the complex needs of patients with schizophrenia.

Case Description

The study involved three patients diagnosed with schizophrenia who were experiencing sensory perception disorders, particularly auditory hallucinations. Prior to the intervention, each patient completed the Auditory Hallucination Rating Scale (AHRS) questionnaire with the researcher's assistance to ensure accurate responses. This baseline assessment was crucial in determining the initial severity and frequency of hallucinations experienced by the patients. The intervention was administered according to the hospital's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure standardized delivery. Each therapy session lasted 10-20 minutes and was conducted daily for three consecutive days. Throughout the intervention, comprehensive assessments were performed using structured interviews and direct observation to monitor changes in symptoms and behaviour. The data collected provided valuable insights into the patients' responses to the intervention, indicating potential improvements in managing their sensory perception disturbances. These findings suggest the feasibility and potential effectiveness of the intervention as part of a holistic treatment approach for schizophrenia patients experiencing hallucinations. The study highlights the importance of exploring complementary therapies in conjunction with conventional treatments to improve patient outcomes. With investigating the effectiveness of this intervention, healthcare professionals can gain a better understanding of its potential benefits and limitations. This knowledge can inform the development of more comprehensive care plans that address the complex needs of schizophrenia patients. Further research is needed to validate the results and explore the long-term effects of the intervention.

The case study results indicate that the intervention was effective in reducing the signs and symptoms of hallucinations in all three patients. The AHRS scores decreased significantly after the intervention, suggesting a positive impact on the patients' symptoms. Specifically, the first patient's score showed a decrease in verbalization of hearing whispers, a significant reduction in daydreaming, hallucination behaviours decreased to a moderate level, improved response to stimuli, increased concentration, and reduced pacing. The second patient's score dropped from 19 to 11, with decreased verbalization of hearing whispers, reduced daydreaming, improved concentration, better response to stimuli, and decreased hallucination behaviours. The third patient's score decreased from 16 to 8, with a considerable reduction in verbalization of hearing whispers, moderate decrease in daydreaming, hallucination behaviours reduced to a moderate level, improved stimulus response, increased concentration, and reduced pacing. The total score before the therapy was 57 (22+19+16), and after the therapy, it was 36 (17+11+8), assuming the first patient's score decreased from 22 to 17. This significant reduction in symptoms suggests that the intervention may be a useful adjunctive therapy for managing hallucinations in patients with schizophrenia. The findings highlight the potential benefits of incorporating this intervention into treatment plans to improve patient outcomes. Further research is needed to confirm these results and explore the long-term effectiveness of the intervention.

Discussion

The results of the intervention demonstrate that this therapy significantly contributes to controlling hallucinations in patients with sensory perception disorders. This finding is consistent with previous research, which showed that psycho-religious zikr therapy is effective in controlling hallucinations (Ardianti et al., 2024; Fashihah et al., 2023). Subjective data from patients reported a reduction in the voices they heard and feeling much calmer, while objective data revealed improvements such as better eye contact and reduced talking to oneself. Psycho-religious zikr therapy provides a positive distraction, shifting patients' attention away from hallucinations and towards repeating religious phrases (Siregar et al., 2025; Novitasari et al., 2025). This helps patients focus on more calming and meaningful experiences, reducing the interference of hallucinations in daily activities. The evaluation results from the three patients supported these findings, indicating a decrease in the whispered voices they heard and an overall sense of calmness after engaging in zikr therapy. The therapy's effectiveness can be attributed to its ability to provide a sense of calmness and relaxation, reducing the severity of hallucinations. With incorporating psycho-religious zikr therapy into treatment plans, healthcare professionals may be able to provide a more approach to managing hallucinations in patients with schizophrenia (Sommer et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2023).

Consistent with previous research as mentioned earlier, another study found that regular practice of zikr therapy decreased the frequency of auditory hallucinations in schizophrenia patients. Patients who underwent this therapy became calmer, more focused, and better able to divert their attention away from disturbing hallucinatory voices. The application of psycho-religious zikr therapy in three patients showed varying degrees of reduction in hallucination signs and symptoms, which may be attributed to environmental factors such as an unstable environment that can exacerbate schizophrenia. Additionally, psychological factors like intelligence level, verbal ability, morality, personality, past experiences, self-concept, and motivation can influence changes in schizophrenia. This intervention highlights the crucial role of nurses in providing holistic care that addresses the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of patients (Ambushe et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2024). With incorporating spiritual approaches that respect

patients' personal values and beliefs, nurses can strengthen the therapeutic relationship and support the patient's overall recovery process. Psycho-religious zikr therapy serves as a non-pharmacological intervention that helps patients feel calmer, reduces anxiety, and redirects their focus away from disturbing hallucinations. As a complementary alternative in mental health nursing practice, psycho-religious zikr therapy can be effective in assisting patients to better control their hallucinations. Its implementation can lead to improved patient outcomes and enhanced quality of life. Further integration of this therapy into nursing practice may provide a more comprehensive approach to managing schizophrenia.

The success of implementing psycho-religious zikr therapy in controlling hallucinations in patients with sensory perception disorders is influenced by several factors. One of the main factors is the patient's awareness and willingness to consistently participate in the therapy. Another important factor is mutual trust, where the patient trusts the nurse regarding the implementation of the therapy aimed at recovery without causing harm to any party. Other factors include medication adherence, a calm environment, and a good therapeutic relationship between the patient and the nurse. These factors contribute to the successful execution of the psycho-religious zikr therapy intervention in accordance with the nursing care plan. A limitation of this case study is the inability to conduct continuous monitoring of the clients to ensure that the zikr therapy was applied immediately during episodes of hallucination. Therefore, the effectiveness of the intervention during critical moments has not been fully measured. Additionally, the patient care process also involved pharmacological therapy through regular administration of antipsychotic medication, meaning that the implementation of psycho-religious zikr therapy was not the primary factor influencing the patients' ability to control hallucinations.

Conclusion

The results of the intervention demonstrated a notable decrease in both major and minor signs and symptoms associated with sensory perception disorders among the patients. This improvement was further supported by the reduction in scores on the AHRS, which objectively measured the severity and frequency of hallucinations. These findings suggest that psycho-religious zikr therapy integration with nursing intervention can play a meaningful role in helping patients manage hallucinations by providing a calming, spiritually focused distraction that aids in symptom control. However, to enhance the overall effectiveness of nursing care, it may be beneficial for future research to explore the integration of zikr therapy with other complementary and evidence-based interventions, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, medication management, or occupational therapy. Such a multidisciplinary approach could address the complex nature of schizophrenia more comprehensively, potentially leading to better patient outcomes, improved quality of life, and greater adherence to treatment plans.

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