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29/6/2023**ORIGINAL RESEARCH****Journaling therapy for patients with social isolation**

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<https://doi.org/10.31603/ihs.9374>**Abstract**

Social isolation led to multiple chronic conditions, including heart, lung, cardiovascular, hypertension, atherosclerosis, and other clinical conditions. When left untreated, social isolation causes depression, psychological stress, and anxiety. However, the use of journal therapy is scarce in the literature. Therefore, the study evaluated the benefits of journaling therapy in patients with social isolation. The finding showed that this therapy decreases the willingness to social isolation in the community setting. It is hoped that journaling therapy can be used for patients with psychological problems.

Keywords: Social isolation; nursing care; community nursing; journaling therapy; mental health issue**Introduction**

Social isolation is a state of change experienced by patients with schizophrenia (Hämmig, 2019). A lonely experience of someone and feelings of resentment towards others as something negative (Donovan & Blazer, 2020). The condition of a person's social isolation is the patient's inability to express the patient's feelings that can cause the patient to express his feelings with violence. Patients with social isolation cannot socialize, have difficulty expressing desires, and communicating appropriately, so patients cannot express anger well (Sukaesti, 2019). Feeling worthless makes it harder for patients to develop relationships with others. As a result, the patient becomes regressive or retrograde, experiences a decrease in activity and a lack of attention to appearance and self-hygiene (Holt-Lunstad, 2021). Patients are increasingly immersed in past travel and behaviour and primitive behaviours, including autistic speech and unrealistic behaviour, resulting in further hallucinations (Sukutiro, 2020). The effects of social isolation include sensory disorders of perception: hallucinations, the risk of violent behaviour (on oneself, others, the environment and verbal), and self-care deficits (Mohammadi et al., 2017). Journaling therapy could be a promising intervention to deal with this social isolation health concern.

Journaling is a standard non-pharmacological tool in the management of mental illness. However, no clear evidence-based guideline informs primary care providers about its use (Sohal, Singh, Dhillon & Gill, 2022). Journaling with a positive effect, also known as positive affect journaling or PAJ, is an emotion-focused self-regulation practice linked to favourable outcomes across medical groups. It is possible to modify it for transmission via the Internet to meet the demand for scalable, evidence-based psychosocial therapies among patients experiencing emotional distress due to medical illnesses (Smyth et al., 2018). Writing therapy, also known as "expressive (emotional) disclosure," "expressive writing," or "written disclosure therapy," may have the capacity to heal both the mind and the body. Writing therapy is defined in the literature as "expressive writing," "expressive disclosure," and "written disclosure therapy." In the earliest tests, participants were asked to write for up to twenty minutes throughout three or four writing sessions on the thoughts and feelings associated with a stressful incident that they found to be the most painful (Mugerwa & Holden, 2012; Colori, 2018). Writing therapy is a method of therapy that is not only inexpensive but also easily accessible and adaptable. Having a mental health expert help you through the process is possible, but it can also be done independently with just a person and a pen (Ruini & Mortara, 2022). It is also possible to practice it in a group setting, with the focus of the group talks being on writing. It is possible to use it as a complementary treatment to another therapy. Writing therapy, in whatever shape it takes, can be helpful to individuals in accelerating their personal growth, engaging in creative expression, and developing a sense of agency and mastery over their own lives (Algristian, 2019).

The studies above mentioned that journaling therapy may help alleviate some of the symptoms of depression, making this practice a practical therapeutic intervention for clients undergoing treatment in psychotherapy. As with anxiety, such interventions were more helpful when they lasted more than thirty days. However, the use of journaling therapy in patients with social isolation is limited in the literature. What needs to be done here is to provide nursing measures such as building relationships of mutual trust, helping patients identify the causes of social isolation, understanding the benefits and disadvantages of being out of contact with others, and teaching patients to become acquainted gradually. Journaling is also a way to express yourself without accepting judgment from others. Therefore, this study aims to understand the impact of journaling therapy on social isolation. Hopefully, this study can help mental health nurses cope with patients having social isolation in hospital or community settings.

Method

In this study, researchers used descriptive research using a case studies design. This case study is focused on investigating patients using psychiatric nursing in patients with mental disorders with social isolation nurse problems, using standard nursery interventions with journalistic therapy innovations. The study was performed in Prof. Dr Soeroyo Hospital Magelang, Indonesia. The data collection was conducted in March 2023. The patient's families were engaged in treatment optimization. Instruments for data collection used in the study use a questionnaire sheet or observation sheet and writing tools. While the tools used for therapy journaling use media such as records, schedules of patient activities in treatment, and observation sheets to evaluate the impact of therapy. The author collects data employing direct observation of the patient. By commenting, the author can know the behaviour and condition of the patient. The statement was conducted over two weeks with a frequency of 6 meetings. The ethical clearance was obtained from Institutional Review Board in the Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang.

Results

Before intervening in the journal therapy, we assessed the patients' clinical status and documented several things. The patient felt lonely, stay at home, rarely involved in social activities, ashamed as the patient has not married yet, unable to start a conversation with others. In addition, the patient appears to be unconnected; the mouth is comatous, he speaks slowly and unclearly, he makes low eye contact, the focus of the patient is easily distracted, prefers to be alone, is passive, the patient looks restless when interacting with others, and the patient seems indifferent to his environment. While after the implementation of the six times meeting obtained, the subjective response of patient said to feel relieved after doing the therapy journaling; the patient stated that she had already included the schedule of activities and the patient can carry out the activities according to the program made, as long as the given therapy reporting the patient can follow treatment until it is completed well and cooperative. At present, the patient does not feel lonely anymore. Patient eye contact interaction is already improved; able to work hard, is capable of being understood, not anxious when interacting with others. The results showed enhanced clinical status as appeared in patients' appearance.

Discussion

Implementation of nursing care focusing on expected outcomes improve the patient's health status (Potter & Perry, 2010). The selection of nursing interventions to accomplish results for which the nurse is accountable is based on a nursing diagnosis, which gives the rationale for making those selections. Nursing diagnoses are generated based on data obtained during the nursing assessment, enabling the nurse to develop a care plan for the patient (Müller-Staub, Lavin, Needham & van Achterberg, 2006). The principle of implementing nursing performed with priority action teaches the application of journaling therapy. The implementation of journaling techniques can begin with the client writing one or two paragraphs at the beginning of the session. This paragraph will reflect how the client feels or what happens in his life and will determine the direction of the session (Tas'adi & Dewi, 2018). Journaling techniques guide the client through different writing exercises, and then they can discuss the information revealed in the journal with the client. Furthermore, writing techniques can range from non-directive, flow-free writing tasks to structured worksheets. Still, a critical element in all journalizing practices is adapting its methodology to the client's needs (Erford et al., 2015).

Writing or journaling therapy can be used to express feelings and thoughts; if both things are overwhelmed, both things lead to a negative impact on the body. Our study found a decrease in the characteristics of signs and symptoms of social isolation in our patients. However, mental health nurses should work in tandem with patients' family and their environment to achieve the best outcomes. Families helped residents rehabilitate by showing them

affection and a sense of belonging, providing both emotional and technical support, and maintaining an active involvement in the residents' lives. Regarding encouraging independent living, social workers can access a valuable resource vastly underutilized named families (Piat, Sabetti, Fleury, Boyer & Lesage, 2011). Even though families are now expected to be accountable for the treatment of a patient with mental illness, it has been found that mental health disorders are related to a variety of dysfunctional social and psychological processes that occur within one's family of origin (Ong, Fernandez & Lim, 2021). Therefore, primary care practitioners might involve the family in various activities, ranging from fundamental functions like psychoeducation and meeting the family's needs to more specialized therapies like family assessment and family therapy. These activities could be performed in various settings, including at home (Norton & Cuskelly, 2021).

Our study documented that the patient can now interact with the surrounding environment, involved in the activities in the background; he can interact and dare to try to establish social relationships. The objective data is that the patient appears to communicate with other friends, the patient's voice is heard slowly, the patient's eye contact is improved, the patient can perform activities in his environment, and the patient is seen to care about the environment. This finding is supported by evidence that journal therapy is a valuable tool for self-discovery and healing (Rowe, 2012). Although self-expressive writing has positive health effects, little is known about the psychological mechanisms underlying these effects. Consistently proven self-affirmation is essential in stress control, which can be used as a viable mechanism for the underlying health benefits of expressive writing (Albalooshi, Moeini-Jazani, Fennis & Warlop, 2020). The study also explains that writing about significant life events and traumatic experiences can significantly benefit mental and physical health. Journaling can be used for self-discovery, growth and self-actualization by channelling feelings and emotions through creative expression and writing processes (Erford et al., 2015). The instructions are like the instructions used, i.e. the time given to write varies from 10 to 30 minutes each session. After writing, the client can also be allowed to re-read and improve his writing. The number of meetings ranges from 3-5 sessions in a row or once a week. In addition, writing therapy can be done both individually and in groups. It produces various results, including decreased bodily pain, improved memory and supports positive growth, reduced traumatic symptoms, improved emotional mood, changed beliefs or thoughts, and so on.

Conclusion

Writing therapy has the potential to be an option that is both inexpensive and straightforward to acquire, and it would require minimum participation from medical experts. However, Specific writing instructions, the specifications of the study design, the nature of the trauma or disease, and whether or not it is still present can all play a role in the systematic variation that can occur in the results. There is sufficient evidence to warrant complete trials of writing therapy in primary care, both for disorders with a substantial psychological component and for psychological issues. Within the next ten years, a potentially helpful new intervention for several illnesses that are frequently challenging to treat in general practice may become available.

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Author's perspective

Key points

- Evidence that writing therapy works is mixed, but it's promising way to use in general practice
- Writing appears to be a relatively safe intervention for patients with social isolation.
- It is necessary to consider the most effective conditions for delivering written material.

Potential areas of interest

- How can the family be involved in journal therapy?
- What supportive factors lead to successful journal therapy?
- When must healthcare technology be evaluated for system optimization?

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