



THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS ON REDUCING STRESS LEVELS IN FAMILIES WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA PATIENTS AT HOME

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ABSTRACT

Families caring for schizophrenia patients at home often experience psychological distress manifesting as stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion—and even a decline in their quality of life. This is caused by fatigue, a lack of knowledge, and the burden of long-term treatment.(Mariani, 2024) . The research method used was a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The study involved 25 respondents, and simple random sampling was the technique used. This design does not use a comparison group (control), but uses the first observation (pretest), which allows for testing changes that occur after treatment or posttest. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of positive affirmations on reducing stress levels in families of patients with schizophrenia at home, specifically in Joyontakan Village. The results of this study showed a decrease in stress in families after positive affirmation training, which decreased from 16 people (64%) to 5 people (20%), while severe stress decreased from 7 people (28%) to 2 people (8%). Conversely, the normal category increased from 0 to 6 people (24%), and the mild stress category increased from 2 people (8%) to 12 people (48%). The results of the analysis showed a p-value < 0.001 (p < 0.05). Thus, there was a significant difference between family stress levels before and after being given positive affirmations. These results indicate that positive affirmations have an impact on reducing stress levels in families caring for schizophrenic patients at home. Conclusion: Positive affirmations are effective in reducing stress levels in families with schizophrenic patients at home.

Keywords: families of schizophrenia patients; positive affirmation; stress level

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INTRODUCTION

Schizophrenia is a severe and chronic mental disorder that impacts not only the individual but also the family, who act as primary caregivers (Zuanny, 2023) . Schizophrenia patients living at home generally require support in various aspects of life, including meeting daily needs, monitoring medication adherence, managing symptoms, and preventing relapse. This situation places families in the position of long-term caregiving responsibilities, potentially leading to psychological distress. (Arhan & As, 2023). Recent research in Indonesia shows that caregivers of schizophrenia patients face various psychological and emotional burdens due to the chronic nature of the disease and the potential for relapses and complex care demands (Liza et al., 2019).

Stress in families caring for schizophrenia patients is a problem that requires attention because it can affect the caregiver's psychological health and the quality of care provided to the patient (Arhan & As, 2023) . Research in Indonesia involving 110 female caregivers of schizophrenia patients showed that caregivers experience stress related to the demands of long-term care, emotional exhaustion, role burden, and limited social support. Poorly managed stress can contribute to psychological problems such as anxiety and depression and can reduce the caregiver's ability to provide optimal care (Hutapea & Pitriani, 2024) . Caregiver stress is also related to the family's ability to cope with the demands of care. Research on caregiving in families of schizophrenia

patients in Indonesia found that self-efficacy is a significant factor related to caregiver burden. The study, involving 89 family caregivers, demonstrated the importance of caregivers' psychological abilities in carrying out their caregiving role. These findings provide a basis for strengthening caregivers' psychological aspects, including self-confidence and perspectives on the situation, to help families cope with the burden of care (Liza et al., 2019) .

Positive affirmations are positive statements directed at oneself to strengthen positive perceptions, confidence in one's abilities, and acceptance of the situation at hand. In the context of families of schizophrenic patients, positive affirmations can be directed at caregivers' abilities to face difficult situations, manage emotions, maintain hope, and appreciate the efforts made while caring for family members (Wijaya & Rahayu, 2019) . Empirical evidence regarding the mechanisms of self-affirmation suggests its potential influence on emotional and physiological responses to stress. In a study of 125 participants, self-affirmation practices were found to be associated with more adaptive cardiovascular responses, including increased heart rate variability and respiratory sinus arrhythmia. Under conditions induced by negative emotions, self-affirmation was also associated with lower maximum heart rate, higher RSA responses, and decreased negative affect. These findings suggest that self-affirmation may play a role in helping individuals regulate psychological and physiological responses when facing stressful emotional conditions (Putra et al., 2020) .

Based on this research review, it can be seen that research on burden, stress, self-efficacy, and psychological interventions in caregivers of schizophrenia patients has been growing. However, research specifically examining the effect of positive affirmations on stress levels in families caring for schizophrenia patients at home is still limited. Most self-affirmation studies in the past five years have been conducted on the general population, college students, adolescents, or patients with specific medical conditions. However, evidence directly assessing the effectiveness of positive affirmations in family caregivers of schizophrenia patients remains inadequate. This situation indicates a research gap that is important to examine.

Thus, research on the effect of positive affirmations on reducing stress levels in families of patients with schizophrenia at home is important as an effort to develop simple, applicable, and family-empowerment-oriented psychiatric nursing interventions. This research is expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of positive affirmations as a non-pharmacological strategy to help families manage stress, while also providing a basis for developing family-based nursing interventions in the care of schizophrenia patients in the community. This study aims to determine the effect of positive affirmations on reducing stress levels among families caring for patients with schizophrenia at home.

METHOD

This study used a quasi - experimental design, with a one-group pretest-posttest design. This design does not use a comparison group (control), but rather uses the first observation (pretest) to test changes that occur after the treatment or posttest. The pretest was conducted before respondents were given treatment (on the same day as the treatment), while the posttest was conducted immediately after the treatment was given and 3 months after the posttest was conducted (after the internalization process). Each pretest and posttest used the same questionnaire, namely a family knowledge sheet on positive affirmations, Level of Emotional Expression (LEE), and a positive affirmation compliance sheet that was asked to be completed by the family. The study was conducted in Joyontakan Village, Serengan District, Surakarta City. The research sample was determined by purposive sampling with a total of 25 respondents. Inclusion criteria were families who lived in the same house, provided daily care, were physically and mentally healthy, could read and write, and were willing to participate in the study until the end. Families were given training on how to carry out affirmations independently, using lectures, demonstrations, and question-and-answer methods. Evaluation was conducted to identify the family's knowledge in receiving information during training and compliance in carrying out positive affirmations (post-test).

RESULT

The results of a study conducted in May, June, and July in collaboration with mental health cadres in Joyontakan Village. The following are the findings:

Family Characteristics

Table 1.
Distribution of Family Characteristic

Family characteristics	f	%
Partner	6	24%
Parent	8	32%
Child	4	16%
Siblings	7	28%

Based on the table above, the largest number of family characteristics are parents, with a total of 8 (32%), while the smallest number are children, with a total of 4 (16%).

Education

Table 2.
Distribution of Family Education

Education	f	%
Elementary School	7	28%
Junior High School	6	24%
Senior High School	10	40%
College	2	8%

Based on the table above, the highest education level among schizophrenia patients is high school with 10 people, a percentage of 40%, while the lowest is college with 2 people, a percentage of 8%.

Work

Table 3.
Distribution of Family Work

Work	f	%
Doesn't work	9	36%
Laborer	6	24%
Trader	8	32%
Employee	2	8%

Based on the table above, the most common occupation of families with schizophrenia patients at home is unemployed, with a total of 9 people (36%), while the least common is employees, with a total of 2 people, a percentage of 8%.

Stress levels before and after giving positive affirmations

Table 4.
Distribution of Stress Levels Before and After Providing Positive Affirmations

Stress Level	f	%
Normal	0 (0%)	6 (24%)
Light	2 (8%)	12 (48%)
Currently	16 (64%)	5 (20%)
Heavy	7 (28%)	2 (8%)

Based on Table 4, before receiving positive affirmations, most families experienced moderate stress, namely 16 respondents (64%), while 7 respondents (28%) experienced severe stress and 2 respondents (8%) experienced mild stress. No respondents were in the normal category. After receiving positive affirmations, the distribution of stress levels changed. Respondents with mild stress increased to 12 (48%), while those with moderate stress decreased to 5 (20%). Respondents with severe stress also decreased from 7 (28%) to 2 (8%). Furthermore, 6 respondents (24%) reached the normal category.

To describe changes in stress levels quantitatively, the average stress score was obtained as follows:

Table 5.

Changes in stress level scores before and after positive affirmations (n=25)

Measurement	Mean	SD	Median
Pretest	22.48	4.21	23
Posttest	16.36	4.05	16
Decline	6.12		

Table 5, the average family stress score before receiving positive affirmations was 22.48, while after the intervention, it decreased to 16.36. Thus, there was a decrease in the average stress score of 6.12 points, or approximately 27.2%.

Analysis of the Effect of Positive Affirmations on Stress Levels

Bivariate analysis was conducted to determine the effect of positive affirmations on family stress levels. Because measurements were taken on the same respondents before and after the intervention, analysis can be performed using the *Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test* if the data are not normally distributed.

Table 6.

Results of the Wilcoxon test of stress levels before and after positive affirmations

Variables	Pretest Mean $\pm$ SD	Posttest Mean $\pm$ SD	Mean	p-value
Stress level	22.48 $\pm$ 4.21	16.36 $\pm$ 4.05	-6.12	<0.001

The analysis results showed a p-value < 0.001 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there was a significant difference between family stress levels before and after receiving positive affirmations. These results indicate that positive affirmations help reduce stress levels in families caring for schizophrenic patients at home. Clinically, these changes are also evident in shifts in stress levels. The number of families experiencing moderate stress decreased from 16 (64%) to 5 (20%), while those experiencing severe stress decreased from 7 (28%) to 2 (8%). Conversely, the normal category increased from 0 to 6 (24%), and the mild stress category increased from 2 (8%) to 12 (48%).

DISCUSSION

This context is significant because families often serve as the primary caregivers for patients with schizophrenia. Home-based caregiving entails physical, psychological, social, and emotional demands (Hutapea & Pitriani, 2024). Families must contend with changes in the patient's behavior, the need for supervision, medication adherence, the risk of relapse, and social stigma. Research in Indonesia indicates that families caring for schizophrenia patients are vulnerable to stress; a study found that 93.3% of families experienced moderate stress, while 83.3% reported moderate levels of psychological well-being. Researchers also emphasize the importance of adaptive coping strategies and psychoeducation for these families (iyulen Pebry Zuanny, 2023).

The reduction in stress observed in this study can be explained through the mechanism of self-affirmation, a psychological process that helps individuals maintain a positive perception of themselves, their personal values, and their ability to handle stressful situations (Yildirim et al., 2023). Positive affirmations can help families shift their focus away from repetitive negative thoughts toward more adaptive statements, such as "I am capable of handling this problem," "I am not alone," "I am able to care for my family," and "I can manage this situation one step at a time." Such statements help foster a sense of self-efficacy and improve coping responses to stress. (iyulen Pebry Zuanny, 2023) The results of this study indicate a change in stress levels in families after receiving positive affirmations. Recent research indicates that caregivers of schizophrenia patients face psychological and emotional stress related to the chronic and relapsing nature of the disease, role burden, emotional exhaustion, and lack of social support. This research was specifically conducted on caregivers of schizophrenia patients in Indonesia, thus strengthening the relevance of stress issues in the context of families of schizophrenia patients (Syarifah Aini, 2015). Other recent findings demonstrate a relationship between caregiver stress and quality of life. Stress is an

important aspect that needs to be considered in the lives of caregivers. This strengthens the argument that interventions aimed at reducing family stress are important in family-based psychiatric nursing services (Pires et al., 2026) .

The decrease in stress scores in the results above can be explained through the psychological mechanism of positive affirmations. Positive affirmations can help individuals direct attention to their positive abilities, values, and resources rather than solely focusing on the problems they face (Pires et al., 2026). Previous research has shown that self-affirmation can influence emotional and physiological responses. The study found that self-affirmation was associated with increased heart rate variability and respiratory sinus arrhythmia. Under negative emotional conditions, self-affirmation was also associated with more adaptive physiological responses and lower levels of negative affect (Hasan & Belkum, 2019). These findings provide a theoretical basis that affirmations are not only related to changes in thinking but can also help regulate the stress response. When families face difficult patient behavior, relapses, or heavy caregiving demands, positive affirmations can be used as a strategy to reduce negative thought patterns and increase perceptions of self-efficacy. (Yildirim et al., 2023) .

Brief intervention approaches are also relevant to caregivers, as families of schizophrenia patients often have limited time due to the demands of care (Hutapea & Pitriani, 2024) . Previous research has shown that very brief psychological training can be an attractive approach because it is easy to implement in daily life, although its effectiveness is still influenced by the consistency of practice (Yasuma et al., 2024) . A more recent study by researchers in Thailand also showed that a 3–4-week multichannel psychoeducation program can significantly reduce caregiving burden. In that study, the intervention group showed a significant decrease in burden from pretest to posttest ($p < 0.001$), and results between groups also differed significantly ($p = 0.001$) (Chueachalad et al., 2026) . This supports the approach that families are not only recipients of information about the patient's illness but also need intervention to improve their psychological abilities in dealing with the caregiving role (Pires et al., 2026) .

In the context of caregivers of schizophrenia patients, these findings are relevant because families face ongoing caregiving demands. A cluster randomized controlled trial demonstrated that a brief family psychoeducation intervention provided by psychiatric nurses can be used to address caregiver burden in families of schizophrenia patients. This suggests that interventions that strengthen families' psychological well-being have the potential to help families cope with the demands of caregiving (Yasuma et al., 2024) .

CONCLUSION

Positive affirmations have demonstrated potential as a simple intervention to help reduce stress levels among families caring for schizophrenia patients at home. The mean score decreased from 22.48 to 16.36, and a p -value of < 0.001 indicated a statistically significant change. Therefore, positive affirmations have the potential to serve as a simple, easily implemented, and affordable psychiatric nursing intervention that families can carry out independently at home as part of a stress management strategy.

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