
The Relationship Between Parenting Styles And Anxiety Levels In Children Aged 3-6 Years During Hospitalization

Dior Manta Tambunan^{1)*}, Febri Theresia Sihalo²⁾

¹⁾ Study Program/Bachelor of Nursing Science, Murni Teguh University, Deli Serdang

²⁾ Study Program/Diploma in Midwifery, Murni Teguh University, Deli Serdang

*Corresponding Author

E-mail: dior.endlessbay@gmail.com

Abstract

Hospitalization is a stressful experience for children, especially when they have to undergo disruptive procedures, which often cause anxiety that affects the child's physical and mental health. This can create a traumatic experience related to hospitalization. This study aims to identify the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety levels in preschool-aged children during hospitalization. The method used in this study is quantitative with a cross-sectional survey design. A total of 52 children aged between 3-6 years (preschool) who were treated at Private Hospital "X" Medan were selected through a purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire was used as the research instrument. Bivariate analysis was conducted using the non-parametric Spearman's Rho test. The findings of this study indicate a significant relationship between parental parenting styles and preschoolers' anxiety levels during hospitalization. Parenting styles significantly influence preschoolers' anxiety levels during hospitalization. Children who receive supportive, democratic, and affectionate parenting styles tend to have better coping mechanisms, resulting in lower anxiety levels than children with less appropriate parenting styles. It is recommended that further researchers conduct intervention studies to identify parenting patterns and add variables of children's coping mechanisms during hospitalization.

Keywords: Anxiety Level, Hospitalization, Parentil Style, Preschool Children

INTRODUCTION

Hospitalization is a situation where a child must undergo hospital treatment for medical treatment, observation, or therapy (Sari & Batubara, 2017). For preschool children (3–6 years old), hospitalization is often perceived as a threatening experience due to separation from familiar surroundings, loss of control over daily activities, and exposure to medical procedures that cause fear and pain (Perdana & Tambunan, 2024). Hospitalization is a significant stressor that everyone must face, especially children, due to the changing environment, changing habits, or separation from family (Agustina et al., 2023). Preschool children are particularly vulnerable to experiencing anxiety during hospitalization. This condition can trigger a psychological response in the form of anxiety that impacts the healing process, the child's behavior during treatment, and the quality of life of the child and their family (Jatmiko & Tambunan, 2024).

Anxiety is a feeling of fear originating from external or internal stimuli, accompanied by heart palpitations, chest pain, and shortness of breath (Fiteli, 2024; Marbun & Tambunan, 2023). Psychological disorders of anxiety and stress in parents can result from a series of treatments, hospitalizations, and home care for children. High levels of anxiety in children during hospitalization are influenced by various factors, both internal and external. Internal factors include age, gender, previous hospitalization experience, the child's temperament, and coping skills. External factors include the hospital environment, family support, parent-child interactions, and daily parenting patterns. Previous research showed that family support is a factor significantly associated with anxiety levels in children aged 3–6 years during hospitalization (Marbun & Tambunan, 2025).

Preschool-aged children tend to experience anxiety during hospitalization (Agustina et al, 2023). Some of this anxiety stems from examinations by staff and invasive procedures that can make children feel uncomfortable (Jatmiko & Tambunan, 2024). Children are particularly susceptible to anxiety during hospitalization. Children can experience mild, moderate, or severe levels of anxiety, which are experienced through various treatment procedures (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2018).

The impact of hospitalization on pediatric patients can cause anxiety and stress at all ages. Children often perceive hospitalization as punishment, leading to feelings of shame, guilt, or fear (Çelikol, Büyük & Yıldızlar, 2019). This leads to aggressive reactions such as anger and rebellion, verbal expressions of anger, and refusal to cooperate with nurses. These conditions, if present, can impact the care process in the hospital (Marbun & Tambunan, 2023). Anxiety is an emotional response and subjective individual assessment influenced by the subconscious, and its specific causative factors are unknown (Perdana & Tambunan, 2024).

One important aspect of the family environment that has the potential to influence a child's anxiety response is parenting style. Parenting style is the way parents educate, guide, direct, and provide emotional support to children in their daily lives. Generally, parenting styles are divided into democratic (authoritative), authoritarian (authoritarian), permissive, and neglectful. Democratic parenting is characterized by warmth, two-way communication, and clear boundaries, which tend to improve children's emotional regulation and coping mechanisms. Conversely, authoritarian or neglectful parenting can increase a child's vulnerability to stress and anxiety when facing stressful situations, including hospitalization (Kumalasari et al., 2023).

Research specifically examining parenting styles as a key variable influencing anxiety level in children aged 3–6 years during hospitalization is still relatively limited, particularly in the preschool population in Indonesia. Furthermore, previous studies have primarily assessed parental involvement through the concept of Family Centered Care, family support, or mother-child interactions, but have not yet explored in depth how the characteristics of parenting styles applied before the child is admitted can influence the child's anxiety response when facing hospitalization (Rohmaniah, Yudianto & Ulfa, 2026).

Democratic parenting, characterized by warmth, emotional support, and good communication, has the potential to reduce children's anxiety levels. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful parenting styles can increase children's vulnerability to stress and anxiety during hospitalization. Therefore, research on the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety levels in preschool-aged children during hospitalization is important to fill the existing research gap and provide a basis for developing family-centered care interventions in pediatric nursing practice.

Based on this description, research on the relationship between parenting styles and anxiety levels in children aged 3–6 years during hospitalization is important. The results of this study are expected to provide scientific evidence regarding the role of parenting styles in shaping children's psychological responses during hospitalization and serve as a basis for developing family-based nursing interventions to reduce children's anxiety levels during hospitalization. Researchers are interested in conducting research with the title “The Relationship between Parenting Styles and Anxiety Level in Children Aged 3-6 Years During Hospitalization at Private Hospital (X) in Medan”.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach. The research design used was a cross-sectional survey. Cross-sectional research is a type of observational study conducted over a short period of time to collect data from a group of respondents (Simanullang & Tambunan, 2023; Basiroen et al., 2025; Judijanto et al., 2024). A total of 52 children aged 3-6 years (preschool) with non-oncology cases were treated at the Private Hospital “X” in Medan with purposive sampling.

The instruments in this study were questionnaires. The parenting style questionnaire with 40 statements used the Guttman scale (No = 0, Yes = 1) and the measurement categories were Good (76%-100%), Sufficient (50%-75%) and Poor (<50%). The anxiety level questionnaire consisted of 16 statements using the Guttman scale (No = 0, Yes = 1) and the measurement categories were Mild (0-4), Moderate (5-8), Severe (9-12), and Panic (13-16).

The data normality test used the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and a p-value of 0.000 ($\alpha < 0.05$) was found, concluding that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, it was decided to use the non-parametric Spearman's Rho test (Puspitasari et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (Parents)

Respondent Characteristics (Parents)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age:		
20-25 Years	5	9.6
26-30 Years	4	7.7
31-35 Years	1	1.9
36-40 Years	7	13.5
41-45 Years	13	25.0
46-50 Years	10	19.2
>50 Years	12	23.1
Gender:		
Male	8	15.4
Female	44	84.6
Relationship with the Child:		
Biological children	52	100
Occupation:		
Housewife	26	50.0
Civil Servant/Police/Military	9	17.3
Self-Employed	14	26.9
Private Employee	3	5.8
Total	52	100

Based on Table 1, it is known that the characteristics of parents based on age of the 52 respondents, the majority are aged 41-45 years with 13 people (25%) and aged 45-50 years with 12 people (23.1%). Based on gender, the majority are women with 44 people (84.6%). Based on relationship with children, all are biological children with 52 people (100%). Based on occupation, the majority are housewives with 26 people (50%).

Prior research indicated that most participants fell within the early adulthood age range, comprising 84 individuals (47.7%). A significant portion of these participants were female, totaling 145 individuals (82.4%). Additionally, the predominant educational attainment among participants was senior high school, with 83 individuals (47.2%). A considerable number of participants were employed as housewives, amounting to 119 individuals (67.6%) (Athariq et al., 2023).

Another observation revealed that the majority of parents in both groups were female, the intervention group (65.2%) and the control group (65.2%). Most parents in the intervention group (95.7%) and the control group (87%) were adults, aged between 19 and 59 years. Furthermore, a large number of parents in the intervention group (56.5%) and control group (39.1%) had completed high school education. The age range of children in both the intervention group (87%) and control group (69.65) primarily fell into the school-age category, specifically between 7 and 12 years old. In terms of gender, children in the intervention group (65.2%) and the control group (60.9%) were predominantly female (Murniyanti & Prasetyorini, 2026).

The experiences that parents have in looking after their children significantly affect how support is provided. More experienced parents are usually more equipped for medical interventions. This readiness boosts their belief in helping their kids. As a result, this can lessen the anxiety that children feel when undergoing IV insertion (Ilyas, Saputra, & Halizasia, 2024).

In various cultures, such as Indonesia, mothers typically take on the main caregiver role, leading them to spend more time with their children while they are in the hospital. Mothers are more likely to engage in fulfilling their children’s essential needs, offering emotional care, and aiding their children in adjusting to the hospital setting.

Fathers tend to focus on providing financial resources, making choices about treatment, and supporting the family unit overall. While the presence of fathers in hospitals may not be as frequent as that of mothers due to job obligations, their participation still positively affects a child's emotional health. The involvement and support of a father can enhance a child's feeling of safety, lower anxiety levels, and strengthen a child's ability to cope during medical treatment.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics (Children)

Respondent Characteristics (Children)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age:		
3 Years	13	25.0
4 Years	9	17.3
5 Years	19	36.5
6 Years	11	21.2
Gender:		
Male	8	15.4
Female	44	84.6
Hospitalization Experience:		
First Time	25	48.1
Repeatedly	27	51.9
Companion:		
Father	8	15.4
Mother	44	84.6
Total	52	100

Based on Table 2 above, it is known that of the 52 child respondents, the majority were 5 years old (19 children) (36.5%). Based on gender, the majority were female (44 children) (84.6%). Based on hospitalization experience, 25 children (48.1%) were first-timers and 27 children (51.9%) were

repeat-accompanied. Based on assistance, the majority were accompanied by their mothers (44 children) (84.6%).

Previous research showed that of the 54 children of respondents who underwent hospitalization, 28 were male (51.9%) and 26 were female (48.1%). Based on age, the majority were aged 5-6 years (25 people) (46.3%), followed by 22 aged 3-4 years (40.7%). Based on past experience, 28 respondents (51.9%) had been hospitalized and 26 respondents (48.1%) had never been hospitalized (Marbun & Tambunan, 2025).

Prior investigations involving all 73 participants (100%) indicated that most of the children were aged between 2 to 6 years, with 46 individuals (63.0%) falling into this age range, and that the predominant gender among the children was girls, totaling 37 individuals (50.7%) (Rahmadana et al., 2023). Another analysis revealed that the prevalent age category among the children was 3 years, comprising 13 individuals (32.5%). In terms of gender distribution, the majority were female, totaling 29 individuals (72.5%). Regarding treatment history, most had never received treatment, amounting to 30 individuals (75.0%) (Athariq et al., 2023). Children who are supported by parents with stable emotional health generally show lower levels of anxiety. This finding aligns with adaptation theory, which highlights the significance of the environment in influencing how a person reacts to stress (Anonim et al., 2024).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Parental Involvement, Pain Level, and Anxiety Level

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Parenting Style:		
Good	8	15.4
Sufficient	44	84.6
Poor	0	0.0
Anxiety's Level:		
Panic	0	0.0
Severe	6	11.5
Moderate	19	36.5
Mild	27	51.9
Total	52	100

Based on Table 3, it is known that based on parenting patterns, of the 52 respondents, the majority had fairly good parenting patterns (44 people (84.6%). Based on anxiety levels, the majority had mild anxiety levels (27 people (51.9%), followed by moderate anxiety levels (19 people (36.5%).

A previous study found that the majority of parents employed an authoritative parenting style (80%). The majority of children experienced mild levels of anxiety (73.3%) (Saputri, 2018). Other research findings revealed that 46.87% of children with democratic parenting styles, 34.37% with authoritarian parenting styles, and 18.76% with permissive parenting styles. The majority (65.62%) had low anxiety levels ((Sagrang, Wowor & Mintjelungan, 2017).

Previous research showed that the majority of parenting styles were in the adequate category, with 70 respondents (60.9%). The frequency of authoritarian parenting styles was low, with 72 respondents (62.6%). The frequency of democratic parenting styles was moderate, with 68 respondents (59.1%). The frequency of permissive parenting styles was low, with 104 respondents (90.4%) (Siburian & Tambunan, 2024). Previous finding showed that the majority of parenting patterns are good, amounting to 34 respondents (87.2%) (Wulandari & Tambunan, 2024). Another study showed that the majority of mothers' parenting patterns were sufficient, with a total of 32 people (45.1%) (Fitria & Tambunan, 2024).

Prior research indicated that a significant number of participants fell into the parental role within the adequate range, totaling 149 participants (84.7%). A notable portion of children faced anxiety classified as panic, comprising 125 participants (71%) (Ismail, Sulistiani & Mohamad, 2025). Another investigation revealed that regarding parental involvement, a predominant number of caregivers were

present alongside their child during procedures that were invasive, totaling 28 individuals (70.0%). Concerning anxiety levels, 16 children (40.0%) displayed mild anxiety, according to findings (Athariq et al., 2023). Findings from earlier studies were gathered after interventions were conducted among children, revealing that 32 children (69.6%) reported experiencing mild pain (Ilyas et al., 2024).

Earlier outcomes suggested that after receiving training from nurses, the vast majority of parents in the intervention group (91.3%) exhibited a positive role, while those in the control group (69.6%) showed an adequate role. The accompanying table illustrates that most parents in the intervention cohort fell within the good role range. In contrast, the control group remained largely composed of individuals categorized as sufficient or below satisfactory levels. This highlights that, in the absence of educational support, parents' capacities to assist their children are not fully realized. These results reinforce the necessity for educational strategies within nursing practice (Apriani, 2020).

The involvement of parents is intimately linked to the emotional expressions they exhibit during actions. When parents remain composed, they often offer their children a feeling of safety. On the other hand, if parents exhibit anxiety, it can be communicated to their children through nonverbal cues. This emotional link points to the existence of a modeling mechanism in how anxiety responses are handled (Marlianti, 2023).

The heightened involvement of parents is also evident in their capacity to offer emotional encouragement to their children. This encouragement fosters a feeling of safety and enhances the child's ease during medical interventions. The emotional support from parents has been found to aid in alleviating distress in children.

Methods such as conversing or sharing stories with children can help divert their attention from discomfort. Distraction serves as an effective non-medical approach to assist with invasive medical procedures. Lowering children's anxiety levels also aids in facilitating smoother intravenous insertions. Children who are calmer are generally more willing to cooperate, thus simplifying the process for healthcare providers. This approach likewise minimizes the chances of failure or psychological harm. Efforts aimed at reducing anxiety are vital for enhancing the quality of healthcare for pediatric patients (Ilyas et al., 2024).

Table 4. Spearman Rho Test of the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Anxiety Levels in Children Aged 3-6 Years During Hospitalization

Variable	Correlation	Parenting Style	Anxiety Level
Parenteral Style	Correlation Coefficient	1	.339*
	Sign. (2-tailed)		.014
	N	52	52
Anxiety Level	Correlation Coefficient	.339*	1
	Sign. (2-tailed)	.014	
	N	52	52

After conducting a bivariate analysis using the Spearman rho test, a Sig. value of 0.014 (<0.05) was obtained. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between parenting patterns and the level of anxiety of children aged 3-6 years during hospitalization at Private Hospital "X". In addition, a correlation coefficient value of 0.339 was obtained, which means there is a weak positive relationship.

The results showed an r-value of 0.412 with a p-value of 0.029. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence between parenting styles and children's anxiety levels at Dr. Moewardi Regional Hospital (Saputri, 2018). Other research findings revealed that data analysis using Fisher's exact test yielded a p-value of 0.01. Therefore, it can be concluded that parenting styles influence children's anxiety levels before undergoing dental filling treatment at RSGM Unsrat (Sagrang, Wowor & Mintjelungan, 2017).

Democratic parenting, characterized by warmth, emotional support, and good communication, has the potential to reduce children's anxiety levels. Conversely, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful parenting styles can increase children's vulnerability to stress and anxiety during hospitalization.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research, the parenting style was fairly good and mild anxiety level. There was a significant relationship between parenting patterns and the level of anxiety of children aged 3-6 years during hospitalization at Private Hospital "X". Parenting styles significantly influence preschoolers' anxiety levels during hospitalization. Children who receive supportive, democratic, and loving parenting styles tend to have better coping mechanisms, resulting in lower anxiety levels than children with less appropriate parenting styles.

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