



SCIREA Journal of Health

ISSN: 2995-7699

<http://www.scirea.org/journal/PMH>

December 19, 2023

Volume 7, Issue 2, April 2023

<https://doi.org/10.54647/pmh330314>

## How to Reduce Anxiety as a Result the Covid-19 Pandemic?

Linda Dwi Novial Fitri<sup>1,2,\*</sup>, Adhies Satya Putra<sup>3</sup> and Iskandar Iskandar<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Atma Husada Mahakam, Psychiatric Hospital, Samarinda

<sup>2</sup>Borneo Mental Health Nursing, Independent Nursing Practice, Samarinda

<sup>3</sup>Intraina Jaya Mandiri, Health Education and Training Development Center, Samarinda

<sup>4</sup>IKIP PGRI, Faculty Sport Science, Samarinda

\*Corresponding author: [linda\\_dnf@yahoo.com](mailto:linda_dnf@yahoo.com); [lindadwinovial@gmail.com](mailto:lindadwinovial@gmail.com)

Phone: +62 81347272591

### Abstract

Background: The negative impact felt by the community from this disaster like a COVID-19 pandemic also led to changes in health conditions, both physical and mental. People are anxious when they have to stay at home, they are afraid when doing activities, let alone having to undergo independent isolation at home. Anxiety needs to be managed appropriately in order to increase a person's physical endurance. One way that can be done is with an affirmation positive. This technique aims to reduce anxiety so that it has a relaxing effect on a person and they become increases immunity. This study purposed to analyze the effect of the affirmation positive technique on the anxiety experienced by persons during the COVID-19 pandemic at a Nursing Practice in Samarinda City. Method: Use a quantitative with cross-sectional design. One group of pre and post-tests was designed to determine the effect of the affirmation on the anxiety during the 10-15 minutes and followed up once after 14 days. A sample of 35 people using an accidental sampling technique with inclusion criteria above 18

years of age and conducting consultations through online media. The instrument used to measure anxiety is HARS. Results of the t-test show p value ( $0.000 > 0.05$ ) with a mean difference of (36.000 – 33.000) meaning that there is an effect of the affirmation positive technique on reducing personal anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conclusion: positive affirmation can be used to reduce the anxiety experienced by people who have an impacted by natural disasters or pandemics.

**Keyword:** positive affirmations, reduce anxiety, pandemic Covid-19

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is a biological disaster that can be a source of stress for a person's life. This disaster has an impact on changes in various aspects of people's lives at large. This is also related to changes in health, especially psychological aspects that can be experienced by everyone in the face of a stressor. Not only individually but currently the whole world is experiencing mental anxiety in dealing with this pandemic disaster. People all over the world are currently suffering and confirmed positive for COVID-19, and statistically, the curve continues to increase from time to time.

It cites a statement from Nursaadah (2021) which states that WHO has agreed that physical health and mental health are two elements that must be balanced to achieve holistic health. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is not only physical health that needs to be considered but also mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic period that changes the order of human life can bring psychological pressure, if that pressure cannot be managed properly it can trigger stress. Uncertainty about various things in a pandemic situation such as when the pandemic will end, work, education, social relations, and other things triggers pressure that can result in stress.

Dynamic changes related to the rules and arrangements from the government to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic also put pressure on everyone mentally. This pandemic disaster provides various continuous pressures that cause a person to become stressed. Stress conditions will trigger anxiety about events that will be experienced during the disaster period. According to Stuart Sundeen (2017), anxiety can continue to change mental health status due

to fear and worry about something that will happen to life and continues continuously in a person.

Many survivors (people who have recovered) from COVID-19 may be at greater risk of developing mental illness. Based on research by psychiatrists, one in five COVID-19 survivors experiences mental illness. The study found that 20% of those infected with COVID-19 were diagnosed with mental disorders within 90 days. Anxiety, depression, and insomnia are the most common symptoms among recovered COVID-19 patients. The researchers also found that the risk of dementia, a condition of memory loss, was significantly higher (The Lancet Psychiatric, 2021).

Anxiety is one of the things that people feel deeply during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey conducted by Borneo Mental Health Nursing (BMHN) for a period of one year (2020-2021) found that 100% of clients who consulted online experienced anxiety. This shows that the community needs psychological support so that their mental condition remains balanced when facing the current COVID-19 pandemic. A balance of psychological aspects is necessary so that a person can remain harmonious and productive in carrying out their daily activities.

BMHN is one of the independent practice media for nursing that aims to provide mental and psychological support to communities affected by COVID-19, especially in the Samarinda City area. Technical support is provided through online consultation with WhatsApp. This is to Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines Mental Health and Psychosocial Support /IASC MHPSS (2020) guidelines which state that the environment needs to be protected and one of the ways is that the presence of a special telephone number can be an effective tool to support members of the community who are worried or stressed. Special telephone number staff/volunteers must be ensured to receive DKJPS training and supervision (eg psychological first aid) and the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak so as not to harm the callers Example: WeChat, WhatsApp, social media, and other forms of technology can be a place for support groups/ maintain social support, especially for those who are isolated.

The form of support that can be provided is to help them be able to manage the anxiety they experience. One action that can be done is positive affirmations a psychological technique that is carried out according to individual abilities. Positive affirmations emphasize positive force within the individual so that it can foster good feelings and behavior adaptive. Through this positive affirmation therapy, you will grow a positive mindset within yourself that can influence subconscious conditions. This has a big influence on changes in perceptual judgment and ultimately has an impact on behavior in dealing with unpleasant external events.

Based on the theory (Cohen and Sherman, 2014) that the meaning of self-affirmations is the interventions bring about a more expansive view of the self and its resources, weakening the implications of a threat to personal integrity. Timely affirmations have been shown to improve education, health, and relationship outcomes, with benefits that sometimes persist for months and years. Like other interventions and experiences, self-affirmations can have lasting benefits when they touch off a cycle of adaptive potential, a positive feedback loop between the self-system and the social system that propagates adaptive outcomes over time will bring about a more expansive view of the self and its resources. They can encompass many everyday activities. Spending time with friends, participating in a volunteer group, or attending religious services anchor a sense of adequacy in a higher purpose. Activities that can seem like distractions can also function as self-affirmations.

According to Alexander (2021) related to understanding about positive affirmations are phrases you can say, either aloud or in your head, to affirm yourself and build yourself up, especially amid difficult situations. They're a way of helping overcome negative thoughts that can sometimes take over and make you doubt yourself.

Based on the description above, it can be interpreted that positive affirmations are empowering words and phrases that practitioners say repeatedly to challenge negative thoughts and improve self-perception. Positive thinking involves regularly focusing attention on healthy thoughts and beliefs, even when things don't go according to plan. Basically, positive affirmations often focus on specific goals or areas for self-development, whereas positive thoughts apply to all aspects of a person's life. Affirmations can be used as a tool to create a mindset that is conducive to positive thinking.

The purpose of this action is to achieve a more relaxed state of mind and a feeling of calm so that it can have a positive impact on reducing the anxiety experienced by a person. In addition, this technique can affect the respiratory tract, heart, and muscular system, and make a person more focused and more comfortable. This is due to the presence of a neurotransmitter in the brain that will cause the relaxation hormone.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The method used in this study is a mixed method with an explanatory design—one group pre and post-test design with paired t-test. The sample is 35 respondents with the accidental sampling technique. For the intervention give for 10-15 minutes and follow up to 14 days.

The inclusion criteria are respondents aged over 17 years and conducting consultations through online media at the independent nursing practice of BMHN Samarinda and experiencing anxiety because there are family members who are confirmed positive for COVID-19. The instrument used to measure anxiety is HARS. The research period is one year (September 2020-September 2021).

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Result:** Analysis of research results includes univariate and bivariate. For univariate demographic data using a frequency distribution, while for univariate research variables anxiety uses a measure of central tendency. Then, for the bivariate test, use the one-sample t-test, however, a data normality test had previously been carried out

**Table 1.** Respondent Characteristics (n= 35)

Respondent characteristics	F	%
<b>Age</b>		
18–24	5	14,3
>25	30	85,7
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	9	25,77
Women	26	74,23

Based on Table 1 above, it can be explained that the majority of respondents are in the adult and productive age range, namely 30 (85.7%). This shows that at this age range during the COVID-19 pandemic, of course, they carry out work activities outside the home because their economic aspects must still be maintained, so they are more vulnerable to being exposed to COVID-19 even though they have implemented health protocols. Then for the gender, the majority are women as much as 26 (74.23%). This shows that women have a higher risk of experiencing anxiety than men because during the pandemic women have a greater household burden than men such as taking care of children, and accompanying children to study, coupled with work activities outside the home for those who have a role in double.

**Table 2.** Respondents Anxiety (n= 35)

	Mean	Median	SD	CI 95% Lower-Upper	Minimum-Maximum
Pre Test	36,00	37	6,051	33,52-37,71	22-50
Post Test	33,00	32	6,105	29,12-33,57	20-46

Based on the results of the univariate data in Table 2, it can be seen that the average anxiety before being given the intervention was 36.00, indicating that the respondents experienced anxiety in the severe range (28-41). After being given five-finger focus therapy, the average anxiety decreased to 33.00 although this figure was still in the range of severe anxiety. If we look at the median of anxiety, there is a decrease of 3 points between before and after the intervention.

**Table 3.** One Sample t-test (n= 35)

	Mean	SD	SE	CI 95% Lower-Upper	t	df	P Value
And Test	3.00	2,075	0,299	37,60-49,27	10,789	34	0,00

The results of statistical tests using paired t-tests can explain that the difference in the average decrease in anxiety before and after the intervention is 3 points. Furthermore, with p-value = 0.00 ( $> 0.05$ ) with a t-count value of 10,789 which is greater than the t-table value of 1.6909, it means that there is a significant effect of giving the positive affirmation to reducing anxiety experienced by people in Samarinda City during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion: Demographic data shows that the majority of respondents are in the adult and productive age range. In this age range, they must continue to work even though there are rules during covid 19 that they must work from home, but not all respondents have the type of work that allows them to be able to comply with these rules. This is supported by the results of interviews in which as many as 5 participants stated the feelings of anxiety they experienced because they still had to be able to maintain the family's economic condition, even though the atmosphere outside the house was not safe. However, they still have to carry out their economic obligations as a form of their responsibility to the family. This kind of condition has put pressure on those who have to continue to work outside the home. This is in line with the statement from the IASC MPHSS (2020) that in conditions of the COVID-19 disaster or other outbreaks, it is natural for people to feel depressed and worried. Common

responses from people affected (either directly or indirectly) include fear of losing their livelihood, not being able to work during isolation, and being kicked out of their jobs.

Gender data shows that the majority who experience anxiety are women. Women with all their advantages and limitations certainly have different self-defense powers during this COVID-19 pandemic. Those who have dual roles will certainly bear a greater social, economic, and psychological burden because they still have to work. Meanwhile, the burden of caring for children who go to school or study from home will be a new additional burden for them. Psychological problems will certainly be more vulnerable experienced by women during this pandemic. Those who have family members who have confirmed COVID-19 will have the initiative to consult with health services, most of them are mothers.

The statement from Nursaadah (2021) is related to psychological changes for women during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely biologically women experience changes in estrogen and progesterone hormone levels, which affects the nervous system which affects mood, and is at risk for mental health disorders. The multi-role carried out by women, especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation has also contributed to the cause of women being vulnerable to mental health disorders. The demands and assessments of the social environment also affect the vulnerability of women to mental health disorders. Based on the results of a quick study of the family resilience survey during the COVID-19 pandemic conducted by Institut Pertanian Bogor from 66% of married female respondents, it showed that the most experienced psychological disorders were easily anxious and restless 50.6%, easily sad 46.9%, and difficulty concentrating 35.5%.

The statistical results in this study indicate that the positive affirmation intervention given to the community with the impact of COVID-19 turned out to have a positive effect on reducing anxiety problems experienced. This is supported by the presence of data before and after the intervention was given indicating the direction of normal data according to the results of the data normality test using Shapiro Wilk. This study also showed that respondents who were given positive affirmations experienced a decrease in anxiety with an average decrease of 3 points. The results of this study are also supported by the results of research conducted by Alexander (2021)) which states that positive affirmations are a way to help shuttle out some of that negativity, in terms of the things that we say to ourselves. It can be stated that positive affirmations can reduce the psychological problems we experience, one of which is anxiety.

This is also supported by Koosis and Vanta (2023) which state that if said regularly, positive affirmations can be an antidote to negative feelings and self-talk. Although it may take time,

by repeating positive (or at least neutral) messages to ourselves, we can rewire the brain to be positive. Based on this, it can be assumed that by carrying out positive affirmations, anxiety can be reduced. Anxiety causes negative thoughts, negative words and will have an impact on less adaptive behavior.

The limitations of this research are: less than optimal because online media depends on signal strength, so long time because of accidental sampling, the small sample, and used one group without a control group.

## **Conclusion**

Positive affirmations have a positive effect on reducing anxiety experienced by people affected by COVID-19. This therapy gives peace of mind and is more focused, gives a sense of relaxation, a sense of happiness, a sense of peace in the heart, and feels more valuable, feels happy. The relaxation resulting from the therapeutic effect will directly stimulate the release of endorphins as a pleasant hormone. Feelings of pleasure arise because the basic needs have been fulfilled, namely a sense of security and comfort, so the people get the adaptive behavior. If these needs have been met, then the level of need for self-esteem and self-actualization will be easily achieved. The effects of positive affirmations can be applied to all individuals who experience the impact of a natural or non-natural disaster.

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank all respondents and their families and participants who have been willing to record data for research purposes. The researcher also expresses his infinite gratitude to the UMKT academic community, especially the Faculty of Nursing, which has provided the opportunity for researchers to continue working.

## **Conflict of Interest**

All Authors declare no conflict of interest and agree with the content of the manuscript.

This article did not report the participants' details. There are no ethical issues.



## References

- [1] Alexande, L (2021). Do Positive Affirmation Work?. <http://clevelandaclinic.org>
- [2] Cohen, G.L and Sherman, D.K. (2014). The Psychology of Change: Self-Affirmation and Social Psychological Intervention. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 2014. 65:333–71
- [3] IASC (2020). Aspects Mental Health and Psychosocial COVID-19 Outbreak Version 1.0. [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/emergencies/IASC\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/IASC_guidelines.pdf)
- [4] IOM (2020). *Mental health and psychosocial support (maps) in the COVID-19 response*. <https://eea.iom.int/sites/eea/files/publication/document/MHPSS-COVID-19-Guidance-Toolkit-v3-EN.pdf>
- [5] Kementrian Kesehatan RI. (2020). *Pedoman Dukungan Kesehatan Jiwa dan Psikososial. Edisi 5. Dinamika Perubahan rumah Tangga Selama Masa COVID-19*. KP2020\_17.06. <http://komnasperempuan.go.id>.
- [6] Knoosis, L.A And Vanta, B. (2023). Ilmu Afimrasi:Respon Otak Terhadap Berpikir Positif. <http://www.mentalhelp.net>
- [7] Simanjuntak, V.G, Pardede, J.A, Sinaga, J., & Simamora, M. (2021). *Journal of Community Engagement in Health Mengelola Stres di Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Dengan Hipnotis Lima Jari*. 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.30994/jceh.v4i1.114>
- [8] Syukri, M. (2019). Efektivitas Terapi Hinosis Lima Jari Terhadap Ansietas Klien Hipertensi Di Puskesmas Rawasari Kota Jambi Tahun 2017. *Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Batanghari Jambi*, 19(2), 353. <https://doi.org/10.33087/jiubj.v19i2.678>.
- [9] The Lancet Psychiatri. (2021). *COVID-19 and Mental Health: Volume 8, Issue 2, P87, February 01, 2021*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(21\)00005-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(21)00005-5).
- [10] Vebiyanti, D. (2020). Kesehatan Mental Masyarakat: Mengelola Kecemasan Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Kependudukan Indonesia*.Edisi Khusus Demografi dan COVID-19, Juli 2020. 69-74. WHO. (2020). Survei Kesehatan Mental Selama Pandemi COVID-19. <https://www.halodoc.com>.
- [11] Wahyuningsih, E., Hidayati, E., Ilmu Keperawatan dan Kesehatan, F., Muhammadiyah Semarang, U., Kedung Mundu Raya No, J., Tembalang, K., Semarang, K., & Tengah, J. (2019). Hipnosis lima jari terhadap penurunan cemas pada pasien diabetes mellitus. In *Jurnal Ilmiah STIKES Kendal* (Vol. 9).

- [12] Wahyu, S and Yunita, R. (2023). Penerapan Afirmasi Positif Untuk Menurunkan Tingkat Nyeri Dismenorea Remaja Putri. AMMA : Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Volume 2, No.1 Febuari (2023) ISSN 2828-6634 (media online) Hal 69-74.